

SANDY BEACHES • RV TRAVELS

OKLAHOMA TODAY

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PRESERVING
THE
TALLGRASS





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July-August 1990

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COVER: The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Osage County. Photograph by Harvey Payne. **Inside front cover:** Wichita Mountains meadow. Photograph by Richard Day.



Today In Oklahoma

Summer is a special season because that's when friends and relatives often visit from out of town. It's a time for picnics and driving the RV to a park or pitching a tent at the lake. And for a large segment of Oklahoma's population, it's powwow time.

"Powwow is a social event that brings North Americans together to dance, share, teach, visit and renew family and cultural ties" reads an exhibit at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona.

The granddaddy of Oklahoma powwows is the American Indian Exposition, a homecoming for Plains Indians. Now in its 59th year, the exposition involves more than 1,000 participants and their families who come back to Anadarko from throughout the country. Parker McKenzie, a 92-year-old Kiowa from Mountain View, provided background information for the story on page 45.

Pawhuska attorney Harvey Payne is called a "prairie activist" by friends, family and foes. Born on the Osage County border on a ranch his great-grandfather settled in 1919, Payne has photographed nearly every kind of flora and fauna in the Tallgrass Prairie. Some of his best work is featured on this issue's cover and in the Portfolio on page 24.

As a youngster it was always a treat, Payne says, to visit the headquarters of the great Barnard Ranch and eat pancakes in the bunkhouse with the cowboys. He gets a kick out of the fact that the Barnard Ranch headquarters will now be the hub of the Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie operation.

Houston writer JoBeth Shields has followed RV travel and RV enthusiasts throughout the country, but says she was unprepared for the variety of RV clubs and the variety of places for them to visit in the Sooner state.

Many she interviewed found it difficult to pick one favorite destination. The Derringtons of Lawton, for example, gave her two second choices: tranquil Clear Creek Lake near Duncan and bustling Lake Thunderbird near Norman.

Frequently, our subscribers say they don't want to miss any issues and ask how they can tell when their subscriptions expire. Melanie Mayberry, who makes sure you always get your magazine at the correct address, has come up with the answer. Just check your magazine label and you'll find the month and year of your last issue.

Last spring *Oklahoma Today* was honored with one award from the Society of American Travel Writers and three from the Regional Publishers Association, both in international competition. Judging was by the University of Missouri Journalism School.

The magazine placed third in the SATW contest for "Best Travel Magazine" category for other-than-monthly magazines. First place went to *National Geographic Traveler*.

Oklahoma Today took second place for "Most Improved Magazine" and placed third for "Best Regular Column" for its food department. Stories entered were Pheasant Dreams by W. K. Stratton, What's Cookin' by Barbara Palmer and Pepper Creek Farms by Jeanne M. Devlin. The May-June 1989 cover, which featured a photo of the Red River by Allen Russell, won an Award of Merit.

Members of RPA produce regional magazines, including *Arizona Highways*, *Texas Highways* and *Ohio Magazine*.

It's exciting to be recognized by our peers in RPA and SATW. Most of all it's reassuring to know that *Oklahoma Today* is delivering our readers top quality stories and photography. That's what's important. —Sue Carter

OKLAHOMA TODAY

Henry Bellmon, Governor



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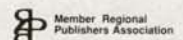
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The Chautauqua Reborn

In 1914, the culture-starved town of Frederick went so gaga over a visiting Chautauqua (sha-'ta-quah) that before the traveling band of



Great Plains Chautauqua scholars as Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Paine, Abigail Adams, Henry Adams and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

orators had its big tent packed, townspeople had jiggled enough change loose for an encore the following year.

In 1915, it was the same story.

And, in 1916.

Radio and the Depression put an end to Chautauquas in rural America by the first World War, and Frederick was no exception. Its last one: 1924.

Or so everyone thought.

Then last year the Oklahoma Foundation for the Humanities approached the Frederick Arts and Humanities Council about hosting one in 1990. "Most of us didn't know what a Chautauqua was," admits Leo J. Fallon, council president.

But Frederick (population 6,000) was frankly flattered to have beaten out 28 cities, including Tulsa, for the honor of hosting the Great Plains Chautauqua of Bismarck, N.D., and the first Chautauqua in Oklahoma in modern memory.

A scouting party was dispatched to Kansas to see a Great Plains' production firsthand. Fallon returned home a convert, echoing Teddy

Roosevelt's observation that the Chautauqua is "the most American thing in America."

"Our fever caught on," says Fallon of the town's now rampant Chautauqua enthusiasm.

Old-time Chautauquas starred great orators and entertainers of the day, from Susan B. Anthony to Mark Twain. Great Plains' features five historic characters—Abigail Adams to Alexander Hamilton. "They could be Thomas Paine stepping out of history," says

Fallon. "By the time you listen for an hour you totally lose sight of 1990."

It may test the imagination, this idea of folks traveling to the southwest corner of the state simply to talk and debate the issues of the day, but Fallon says: "This was done. It was something that caught on in these areas where people were starved for entertainment."

And Fallon believes for five days this summer it could happen in Frederick again.

Chautauqua '90, a Homecoming '90 event, will run June 29-July 3 at Pioneer Park. Admission is free.

For information, call (405) 335-3287.

A Fine Line

When Karyn Gilman decided it was high time someone pulled together a museum-quality exhibit of contemporary calligraphy, she began in a surprisingly informal way. She got on the phone and started talking.

"I chatted with people," says Gilman, publisher of the Norman-based quarterly, *Calligraphy Review*. As the publisher of the only international calligraphy journal anywhere, Gilman's rolodex is bursting with the names of the world's most accomplished calligraphers.

Invitations to selected calligraphers for the exhibit "Letters/Lines/Images: Currents in International Calligraphy" netted her 48 artists from eleven countries and a body of work that may be a surprise to people whose notion of calligraphy is limited to pretty words on paper.

In Gilman's view, calligraphy is all art based on the strokes used to make letters. Though her definition of calligraphy is broad, her standards for fine calligraphy are narrow.

Among the pieces exhibited will be the work of English calligrapher Donald Jackson, official scribe to Elizabeth II, inscriptions on handmade paper and three-dimensional pieces. There's even a



From the exhibit: Stoneware ball form by Danish artist Bo Kristiansen

Steuben bowl.

The exhibit will debut at the Kirkpatrick Center in Oklahoma City on August 16. In October, it will travel to Kansas City and then to Michigan. The show is the first major calligraphy exhibit circulated in more than 15 years.

"This show," Gilman predicts, "will broaden horizons."

Fish and Whistle

Chances are if you first fished with a cane pole in a farm pond, your first fish was a bluegill sunfish. Bluegills are easy fish to catch because there are lots of them and they have simple tastes—worms.

In the Tom Sawyer fishing program, held four summer evenings each week at the Lake Texoma Resort, a naturalist equips kids aged 6-12 with cane poles, straw hats and worms. The kids fish for bluegills

and the naturalist tells tall tales.

Well, fishing stories.

To help increase the chances that the novice fishermen will go home with their own stories, naturalists plant grass underwater near the bank for bluegill nests. Children throw back all the fish they catch, but they do get to keep the straw hats.

The \$7 fee includes a picnic lunch. For more information, call (405) 564-2311.

LETTERS

In reference to the story on the Geronimo Motor Company of Enid (January-February 1990), I remember a beautiful, big, black car driving into our yard (seven miles west of Nash) and the driver talking to my father, A.L. East. A day or two later the man came again. This time, my father gave him a check for \$200 for shares in the Geronimo Company.

My mother, who was feeding four kids mostly on eggs and milk and a few vegetables they were able to grow, was very upset—\$200!

The kids have gotten by well enough to live comfortably. Through all these years, however, we sometimes, when something doesn't go quite right, say, "Oh, Geronimo."

Dorothy East
San Diego, California

I thoroughly enjoyed "Cowboy Poets" in the March-April edition of *Oklahoma Today*. Wally McRae's poem "Reincarnation" was especially entertaining, and the others printed were worth reading. We had seen some of the cowboy poets on the Carson show and look forward to each appearance.

I wondered if there would be a cassette tape of this Oklahoma Cowboy Poetry Gathering? It would be most interesting listening.

Thanks again for a great article.

Jeanette Martin
Lone Grove

Unfortunately, a cassette tape of the *Oklahoma gathering* is not available. However, the *Cowboy Hall of Fame* in *Oklahoma City* has tapes of both *Baxter Black* and *Waddie Mitchell*, who together headlined the 1990 gathering. For more information on ordering tapes, write the *Cowboy Hall of Fame*, 1700 N.E. 63rd, *Oklahoma City*, OK 73111 or call, (405) 478-2250.

Ever since receiving your March-April 1990 issue, I have looked at it almost

daily. It is one of the better issues since I've been a subscriber, which is over 10 years now.

I really have seen very little of the state so enjoy seeing it through pictures and stories. Obviously we are to be proud of this magazine as my birth state (Minnesota) does not have a similar production. I've been an Okie for 28 years and look forward to more leisurely days when time will allow me to see some of the sights and events in person.

Keep up the good work.

Fred D. Orr
Tulsa

It isn't always easy to find *Oklahoma Today* on the newsstand when we come up for a visit so I am sending for a subscription.

You have so many fine stories that I am loathe to complain but in the story *The Wild Onion Dinner* (March-April 1990), Barbara Palmer may have lived in Bartlesville as a youngster but she surely didn't do much blackberry picking ... at least in the fall.

Anyway, wish I could be there to try the wild onions and eggs.

Dora Wilson
Odessa, Texas

We stand corrected on blackberry season. Blackberry season ends no later than early August in northeast Oklahoma. As for the blackberry cobbler served at the dinner, thank modern technology for frozen blackberries.

NEXT ISSUE: We'll introduce you to the men and women intent upon the re-greening of Oklahoma, take you behind the scenes of the annual Professional Women's Rodeo Association finals at the Lazy E Arena in Guthrie and spook you with some of the best Oklahoma ghost stories ever to be heard around the campfire. All this and a photo essay on Washington Irving's historic trek through the northeastern portion of the Sooner State in the September-October issue of *Oklahoma Today*.

BOOKS

Box-Office Buckaroos, The Cowboy Hero from the Wild West Show to the Silver Screen by *Robert Heide and John Gilman*, *Abbeville Press, New York; \$19.95.*

The cowboy is a complex American icon, part truth, part myth and part wishful thinking. Heide and Gilman's text includes a short history of the authentic cowboy, but the authors concentrate on the romantic image of the cowboy in the last 100 years, when right was right, friends were true and the best a man could do was stand tall and shoot straight.

With so much ground to cover—from Wild Bill Hickok to Will Rogers to Gene Autry to Matt Dillon to the craze for cowboy collectibles—many subjects get a quick once-over. The strength of the book, however, lies not in its analysis of the pop-culture cowboy, but in its abundance of offbeat anecdotes.

The reader learns, for instance, that Tom Mix once got a room for his horse Tony in a Detroit hotel by unearthing an old ordinance that instructed hotels to provide shelter for both man and beast. And that former Beatle Ringo Starr chose his stage name as "a tribute to Gene (Autry), kind of like I was his sidekick."

The authors reserve particular affection for campy cowboy collectibles: Tom Mix glow-in-the-dark spurs, the Roy Rogers and Trigger Signal Siren Flashlight, Hop-A-Long Cassidy earmuffs.

Readers who delight in odd details may be pleased to find a list of Gene Autry's "Cowboy Commandments" or the Tom Mix Straight Shooters secret password. They may learn something, too. The Lone Ranger wasn't saying "Hi-ho, Silver," all those years, he was saying "Hi-Yo."

—Barbara Palmer

Tumbleweeds

The Willful Weed

*I'll keep rolling along
Deep in my heart is a song
Here on the range I belong.
Drifting along
with the Tumbling Tumbleweeds.*

—Bob Nolan, 1934

The tumbleweed is an almost perfect metaphor for the Old West. As shallowly rooted as a restless cowboy, a tumbleweed goes where the wind blows. They're stubborn, they're rough, and the sight of a tumbleweed rolling in the wind is about as lonesome as a train whistle.

There are those, it should be pointed out, who wish the tumbleweed would just drift on back to where it came from. Tumbleweeds, for all their ambience, are a persistent thorn in a western farmer's side.

The proper name of what most folks call a tumbleweed is Russian thistle; its Latin name, *salsola iberica*. The pesky thistles aren't native, but first appeared in this country in 1873, roughly about the same time that the popular image of the cowboy began to loom large on the American landscape. Since then, tumbleweeds have loomed large as well.

The tumbleweed was inadvertently planted in South Dakota with flax seed brought here from Russia. From South Dakota, tumbleweeds spread across the western half of the United States. Here in Oklahoma, tumbleweeds grow only in the western half of the state and are concentrated in the far western counties.

According to Dr. James Estes, a plant

taxonomist at the University of Oklahoma, tumbleweeds were a weed in the right place at the right time.

Their post-Civil War invasion was helped greatly by the fact that parts of the Great Plains were being settled. In Oklahoma, acres and acres of fields were cultivated for the first time ever in the 1880s and 1890s. Tumbleweeds do well in what Dr. Estes calls "opened land," land where the native grasses have been plowed under.

Once a tumbleweed gets a foothold, its capacity for mischief is astonishing. One plant can produce up to 60,000 seeds. Those seeds that grow into plants exude a toxin that spoils the soil for other kinds of plants. Sticky and tenacious, tumbleweeds topple fences,

clog up threshers and increase the chance of fire. "I've heard that at one time it was against the law to let tumbleweeds go to seed," says Roger Mills County extension agent Max Galloway.

Besides the havoc tumbleweeds wreak in cultivated fields, their wandering ways cause other kinds of trouble, too.

The tendency for tumbleweeds to quit tumbling in the middle of a country road is well-documented. Alone, "one of them will hook right under your car," says longtime Woodward resident Betty Semmel. In bunches, "I've seen them stop up a whole intersection. The county has to come out and clear them out."

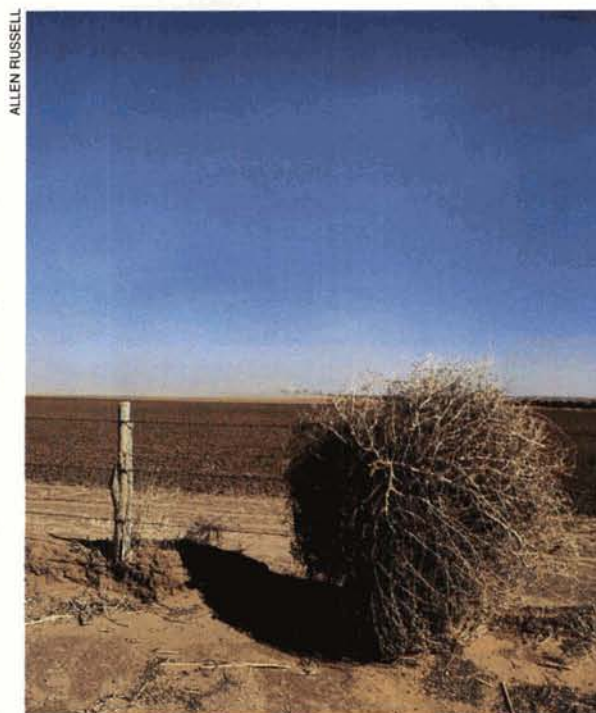
Settlers did find a few uses for the lowly tumbleweed in earlier times. Cattle nibbled on the young thistles. At Christmas, pioneer families stacked them two or

three high and hung decorations on them. More recently, Frankie Herzer of Woodward reports that someone of her acquaintance spray-painted a tumbleweed white and hung valentines on it. Dr. Estes has heard of an Arizona company that binds tumbleweeds into logs and sells them as fire starters.

Western farmers combat tumbleweeds with a combination of mechanical and chemical warfare, digging them up and spraying them. They've learned to live with them, too.

"They're sticky and they are a nuisance," says Betty Semmel. "But they're a part of our life out here. I wouldn't trade living here for anything in the world."

—Barbara Palmer



A lone tumbleweed looks pretty harmless. But don't turn your back on this outlaw weed, counsel Western farmers.

RV HEAVEN

Where It Is In Oklahoma Depends On Who You Ask

By JoBeth Shields

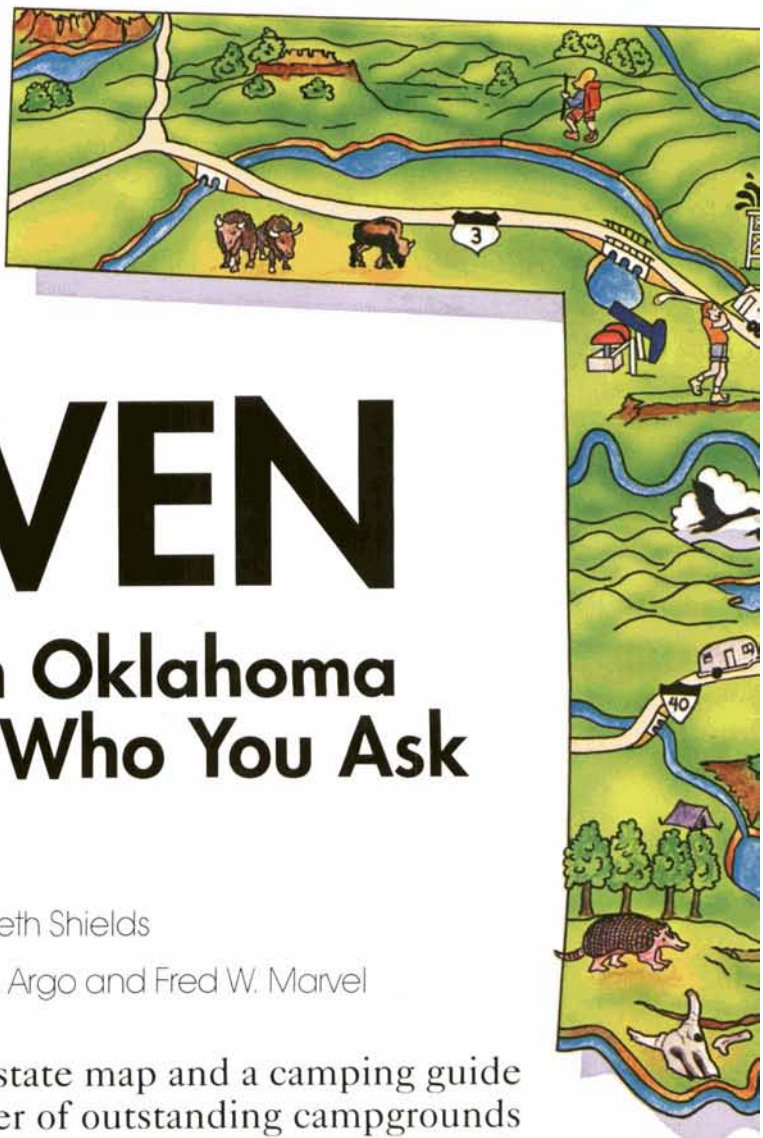
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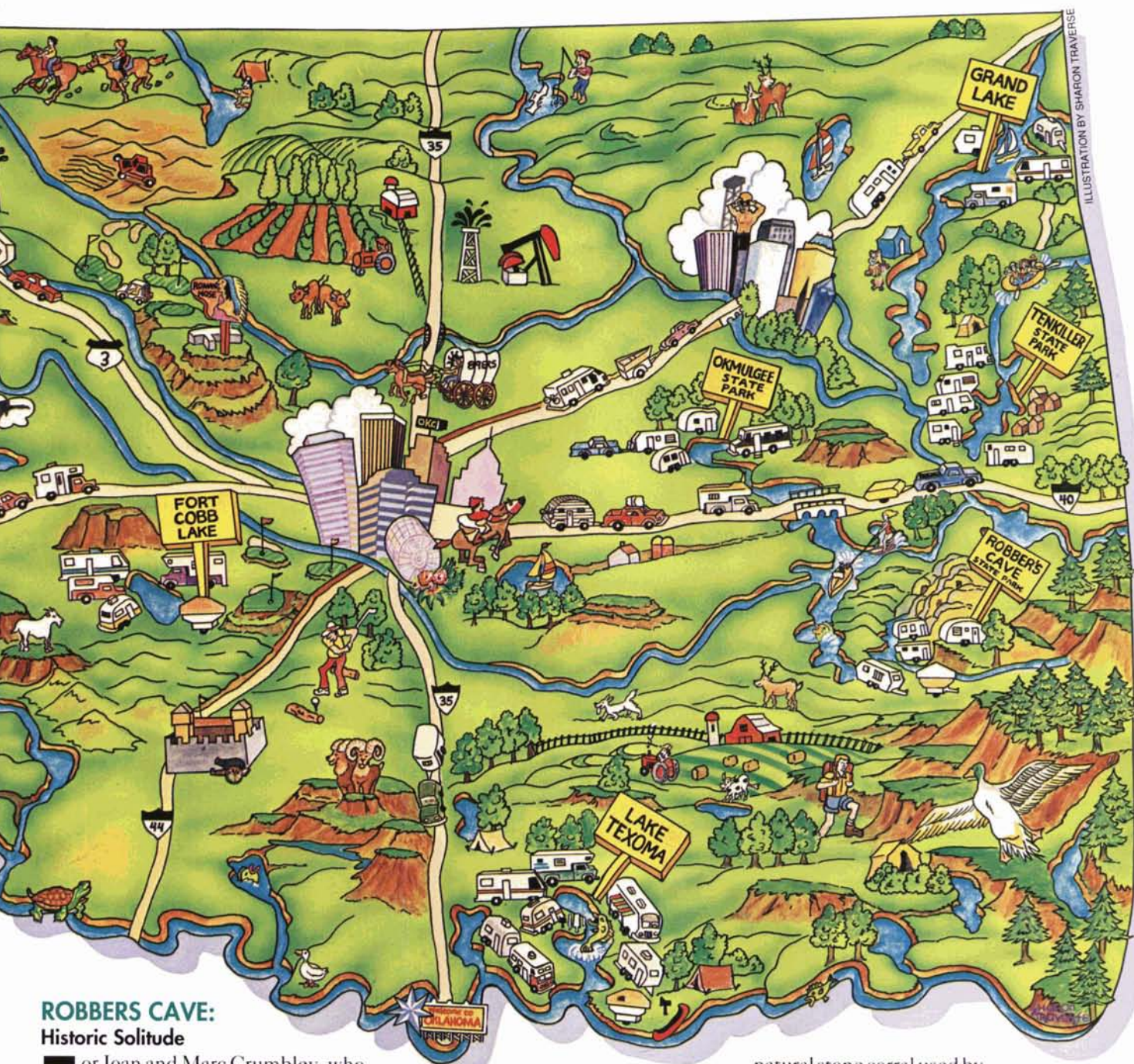
Anyone with a good state map and a camping guide can find any number of outstanding campgrounds in Oklahoma. But finding the ultimate campground, the one that fits like a glove, takes a little more time.

Behind the well-known names of Oklahoma's camping hot-spots—Lake Tenkiller, Lake Texoma, Grand Lake—are those particular spots that are exactly right. It's those that we're concerned with here, the ones that are... almost perfect.

We've talked a handful of Oklahoma RV enthusiasts into sharing their favorite places to camp in Oklahoma. Their choices are as individual and as varied as they themselves are.

A few of the travelers included here go alone. Most caravan with friends in RV clubs. Each, though, is looking for his own version of paradise. When they find it, they put away the guides and maps. They soon know the route by heart.





ROBBERS CAVE: Historic Solitude

For Joan and Marc Crumbley, who operate a pawn shop in Oklahoma City, it's the outlaws that bring them back to Robbers Cave State Park. Joan admits the history and mystique of the area, which once served as a hideout for outlaws like Jesse James and Belle Star, fascinate them.

The Crumbleys have a soft spot for Robbers Cave partly because it offers more solitude than many state camp-

grounds. The trails in the park are about a mile from the campground and are marked discreetly with wooden signs. At least once Joan and Marc have gotten lost following some of the more obscure paths. "I could just see me up there at night with those animals," says Joan with a laugh.

The wooden signs identify other points of interest, like a cave and a

natural stone corral used by the outlaws. "You can find the outlaw's lookouts where they could spot posses coming after them," Joan says. "You just feel like a highwayman when you're up there."

The 8,246-acre park has three lakes, paddle boats, a swimming pool and bathhouse and miniature golf.

When the Crumbleys visit Robbers Cave, they stay at an equestrian camp-



ground. Visitors stake their horses right beside their campers and ride the nearby horse trails.

Not so unlike the days when robbers on horseback frequented the caves.

LAKE TEXOMA:

Good Clean Fun

Lawton's Bob and Mildred Derrington enjoy socializing with friends as much as they enjoy visiting the state's many lakes. This couple isn't looking so much to escape from people as to escape *with* people. Their idea of the perfect destination in Oklahoma is a friendly place fit for a crowd, a place like Texoma Christian Camp, on the western bank of Lake Texoma near Kingston.

Bob, who works in construction, and Mildred, who is interested in genealogy, venture to the camp at least twice a year with members of their Good Sam chapter. The campground is a church youth camp, so it has excellent facilities for large groups. A big hall with two massive fireplaces encourages visitors to gather round the fire, to relax and enjoy the camaraderie—an activity the Derringtons love.

Part of the attraction of the camp is a fully equipped kitchen for communal cooking. "We'll do breakfast and have pot luck and spend a week there in March and November," Bob explains. "Many people say, 'Well, what do you do?' I say, 'We lie a lot.' We just have conversation, play cards and games. We play Thirty-one for a penny a hand. You can play all evening and lose maybe three cents."

Like many campers, the Derringtons started with a tent. In 1968, they bought an RV in upstate New York, so Bob could stay there while working on a construction project.

The Derringtons liked the RV lifestyle so well, they bought a second RV in Oklahoma. They bought the second RV while traveling in the first one, so Bob pulled both units home. He made

An RV passes through lush southeastern Oklahoma.

FRED W. MARVEL



A paddle-wheel riverboat, the Cherokee Queen, makes 90-minute turns around Grand Lake, sometimes in tandem with the Cherokee Queen II. Together the boats can carry 600 passengers. Some trips feature dancing, gospel singing or dinner. Charters are available.

it—in spite of a lot of well-meaning advice, he says.

His advice: It's much more fun to go camping with just one rig and a lot of friends.

GRAND LAKE:

Picnics on the Beach

Grand Lake in the northeast, with a 1,300-mile shoreline, has long been a favorite spot for many campers—especially the area around Grove. Grove is such a center of activity at Grand Lake, you could almost find the northeastern town just by following the RVs and boat trailers. But across the lake, along less-traveled roads, Tulsans Betty and Jim Godwin have found their own lakefront paradise.

Gray's Ranch (southeast of Fairland) sits in a shady hollow 140 feet below the neighboring landscape. Having negotiated the quarter-mile access road, campers pull up by the lake or farther back among the oaks and evergreens. Dirt roads lead to wooded sites where the hookups are attached to trees. A pavilion near the water provides shade and shelter for group activities.

Beaches, although rocky, are clean, and dotted with gnarled pieces of drift-

wood. Beach picnics are a tradition with the Godwins and their friends.

Once "we had a weenie roast right down on the water," Betty recalls. "This one fellow said he was freezing, so somebody said, 'Take a rock from the campfire and put it under your chair.' He did, but he had one of those lawn chairs with plastic webbing, and the rock melted the webbing. He fell through the chair with his legs straight up and his bottom about an inch away from that hot rock!" Everyone was laughing so hard, Betty says, it took them a while to come to his rescue.

Betty and Jim bought an RV about ten years ago because motel bills were high and they refused to give up traveling. They're now on their fourth rig and have logged more than 50,000 miles in it. In fact, the retired couple is rarely home on weekends. Many of those weekends actually start on Wednesday, admits Betty.

"We like the state parks and the U.S. Corps of Engineers parks, but the corps does not reserve, so when you're taking 20 members (of their local Good Sam chapter), you've got to have a place that reserves," says Betty.

Even when camping alone, Betty points out, it's a good idea to call ahead



Lake Tenkiller campers drive to nearby Tahlequah to the Cherokee Heritage Center; for a performance by the River City Players, a musical revue; or to browse in antique stores.

for reservations. "There are a lot of RV parks advertised, but you get there, and they're full of permanents."

OKMULGEE: Stone Sculpture

Unusual architecture and archaeological finds are not the usual campground lures, but for Denny and Delma Rhett from Ramona, they are among the chief attractions at Okmulgee State Park.

They discovered Okmulgee when

they were looking for a good place to fish and camped at Dripping Springs Lake, a trophy bass lake north of the park's main campground. But when the Rhetts replaced their tent with a fifth-wheel trailer recently, they stopped towing a boat and fishing lost some of its appeal. (A fifth-wheel RV is a rig pulled by a pickup truck. It is legal in Oklahoma to pull both a fifth-wheel and a boat.) Instead of a boat, Denny and Delma now bring bicycles and cycle around the park.

The park's biggest draw for the Rhetts, however, is the sandstone structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of the WPA in the 1930s. Big Rock Shelter, Little Rock Shelter, and what's called "the wall" were built with stones quarried in the area.

According to park ranger Steve Whitlock, "the wall," also called "the cliff house," was originally a ritzy night club built during the '30s. "As time went on, it turned into a cutthroat bar," he adds. After the place burned in 1958, the remaining structure became a popular spot for anglers. The Rhetts pull tables and chairs into the picturesque shelters for picnics.

The 40-foot-high dam, too, was built from chunks of hand-cut native stone. "And it's a very pretty waterfall dam," Denny says. "It's really pretty when there's just a slight amount of water coming over it. It's like a water sculpture coming down the spillway."

One of the most interesting things Denny has found is at the lake shoreline. Unusual crinoid fossils wash out of the sand, and on a recent visit he and his niece found several. According to Ranger Whitlock, horn coral, two types of snails and rare button coral exist in the area. "As far as I know it's the only place you can find button coral on the North American continent," Whitlock explains.

It's illegal to remove the fossils from the park, but still fun to find the ancient treasures and study them. Some of the best places to spot specimens include a section near the boat ramp in Area 3 and around the Little Rock Shelter.

FT. COBB: The Right Course

When the Rolling Okies roll into town, it's almost as if they bring an entire town with them. With 155 members, the Rolling Okies are the largest RV club in the state. "Our favorite place is just about anywhere there's room for us," says club president Virginia Romano.

THE MORE THE MERRIER

If the idea of camping in a pack isn't exactly a thrill, Herschel Minsall understands completely. Even Herschel was dubious when his wife, Melba, accepted an invitation to attend a "rally" with a friend's RV club.

Since nobody could describe exactly what was so satisfying about the weekends, "I thought it would be boresome," he remembers. Not only did Herschel end up having a good time, he and Melba eventually joined the club.

Delma Rhett is another convert to RV clubs. "I love camping alone, but it just seems to bring things out more when you're in a group."

Besides acquiring a new vocabulary (weekend campouts are called "rallies" or "runs") new members to RV clubs suddenly have access to a wide range of benefits. Club members share information about the best way to maintain an RV and tips about how to make minor repairs. They swap addresses for places with good prices for parts and accessories. They become eligible for group discounts.

But, by far, the single best thing about RV clubs, members say, is the fellowship they find. Almost without exception, Delma says, club members are friendly and outgoing. They eat meals together, play cards and bingo together, dance and sing together. When it rains, they're stuck inside together.

The club functions much like an extended family, Delma says. "We call one lady 'Mommy Tommy' because she's always straightening your collar or checking to make sure you've drunk your orange juice."

Delma figures that the RV club members are compatible because not only do they all like the outdoors, they are usually from a single geographic area. Clubs in urban areas mostly have urban members; small town clubs have small town members. Most members of RV clubs are older, Delma says. Of the 17 members (members refers to rigs or couples) from the Bar-Dew club in northeastern Oklahoma, only two have children at home.

Within the network of clubs in the state are special interest clubs. Owners' clubs, like Fleetwood, Airstream, Winnebago and others, have local chapters. Many are affiliated with the Family Motor Coach Association.

The Good Sam organization, formed to assist fellow travelers (hence the name Good Samaritans), boasts 53 chapters statewide. There's Salty Sams in Longdale, Happy Sams in Oklahoma City, Tornado Sams in Woodward, Sooner Sams and Sim-R-On Sams, Red River Sams and Roadrunner Sams, everything from Ada Rambling Sams to Wichita Mountains Sams. For singles, there are Loners of America and two chapters of Loners on Wheels.

The Modern Wagoneer Sams, a Good Sam chapter in northern

Oklahoma, is known for its dune buggy driving members. According to Blanchard resident Joretta Paige, members decorate their buggies and have a ball participating in parades around the state. "We fly our Good Sam flags, and everybody waves." Joretta is aware that some dune buggy owners race them over sand dunes and splash them through creeks. "I guess you could," says Joretta, doubtfully, "but our dune buggies are special to us."

Campers who can't abide cigarettes might consider the Clean Air Sams, a Good Sam chapter in Tulsa that accepts only non-smokers. Oklahoma City's Rollin' Squares rallies almost always include a square dance. The Second Chance Sams in Norman provides special support to folks who have experienced a serious health problem or had a life-threatening accident.

Clubs like Loners of America and Loners on Wheels help singles overcome worries about camping alone. The standard greeting for LOA, in fact, is a

hug, so everyone feels welcome. And age is no object. OKLOA president Elsie Hensley points out, "We have women 78 and 80 years old who still handle the big rigs."

From dancing to singing to golfing, about the only thing club members don't do much of is outdoor recreation, like fishing and skiing. "I've had my boat in the garage for the last two years," says Herschel Minsall.

"We just don't have time," says Joretta Paige. "We're too busy visiting and eating and sightseeing."

For information on Good Sam chapters in Oklahoma, contact state directors, Joan or Marc Crumbley, 2600 S. Portland, Oklahoma City, OK 73108. For the Family Motor Coach Association, write 8291 Clough Pike, Cincinnati, OH 45244, or call (800) 543-3622.

For information on the OK-A-LOW (Loners on Wheels) chapter in the northeast, contact Gladys Dickson, 10843 E. 15th, Tulsa 74128; in the south central region, write Martie Cox, 1109 Rosedale, Ponca City 74604. For information about Loners in America, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Loners of America, Route 2, Box 85E, Ellsinore, MO.

Mike and Barbara Brown, members of the Okie Bagos and president of the Oklahoma Campground Users Association, a consumer advocate group that works with the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, are sources of information about camping and hiking organizations. Write to them at 4623 N.W. 35th, Oklahoma City 73122.

—JoBeth Shields



Camaraderie is a big part of RV clubs' appeal. Above, a chess game at Red Rock Canyon.

JIM ARGO

Although only about a third of the members attend any given outing, their numbers are still impressive. When 60 RVs pull in, "Most places just turn the whole place over to us," says Herschel Minsall. Minsall is wagonmaster for the group, and his job is to scout out sites that can accommodate them.

One of Minsall's recent picks was Ft. Cobb State Park, along Highway 9 in southwestern Oklahoma. An enclosed fishing dock on Ft. Cobb Reservoir and the deer, turkey and quail found in nearby hunting areas bring hunters and fishermen to the park. But the Rolling Okies, who always manage to squeeze in some golf into their schedule, come for the golf.

Golfers come from all over the state to golf at Ft. Cobb's 18-hole course, says park employee Clay Plaster. The back nine, where golfers encounter prickly pear cactus and large trees, is especially challenging. The roughs at the Ft. Cobb course truly are rough.

The Rolling Okies rent the community center at the park, which has a full kitchen and even a cafeteria line. Different couples in the club take turns providing meals for the rest. (Herschel's wife, Melba, doesn't include cooking regularly in her idea of a vacation.)

Between meals, members play cards and bingo, or knit (Melba quilts) in the community center. History and antiques are special interests of the group, and from Ft. Cobb, it's an easy drive to Anadarko's museums and shops.

Though the Minsalls could easily golf and shop and quilt and visit from their home base in Oklahoma City, there is something special about the weekends, they say.

Herschel says: "It's like old home week, getting together like that."

TENKILLER:

An Outstanding Peninsula

Henryetta native Elsie Hensley lives only 12 miles from Okmulgee, a hop and a skip from Lake Okmulgee. Huge Lake Eufaula is a few more miles to the south. But she

heads east when she wants to escape to her favorite campground, Strayhorn Landing, 70 miles away at Lake Tenkiller.

"Strayhorn Landing IS beautiful," she says simply. "It's surrounded on three sides by water. It's small, but it's on a bluff, and you overlook the water."

The campground is run by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, which means you can't make reservations. During the summer, the campground is usually full by 8 p.m. Most RV groups come to the campground in the off-season, before Memorial Day and after Labor Day.

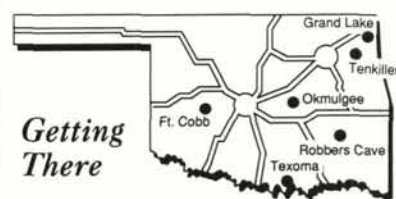
Among the attributes of Strayhorn Landing are posted quiet hours, a swimming beach and, of course, the view. A nearby marina rents pontoon boats, ski boats, jet skis and scuba diving gear. (You can take scuba lessons at the marina, too.) Just up the hill from the campground is the Fin and Feather resort, popular for dinner. And the winding roads that lead to Tenkiller and Strayhorn Landing are lined with bait shops and gingham-curtained cottages where you can browse for antiques.

When Elsie started camping about 35 years ago with her husband, they slept under the stars. They bought a tent, a travel trailer and, finally, a motorhome. When her husband died ten years ago, Elsie kept on camping. She joined Loners of America, a national organization for single RVers, and this year, she's president of the OKLOA chapter.

Elsie, in fact, finds the RV lifestyle to be so much fun, she's put her house on the market and plans to become a full-timer.

Then her home away from home will simply be...home. 

JoBeth Shields is a freelance writer living in Houston, Texas. She writes travel articles frequently for motorhome magazines. Jim Argo, a staff photographer for the Daily Oklahoman, has been an RVer for almost 20 years.



Getting There

Rolling through Oklahoma can be done fast—via its many interstate highways—or slow on its scenic backroads. Here's how to get specifics on these six destinations:

Robbers Cave State Park is located five miles north of Wilburton on S.H. 2. Fee for a full hookup (electric, water and sewer) is \$14. Electric and water only is \$11 and the equestrian campground fee is \$10. The park office takes reservations beginning April 1. For more information, call (918) 465-2562.

Texoma Lake is four miles east of Interstate 35 on U.S. 70. For information about Texoma Christian Camp call (405) 564-2630.

Gray's Ranch at Grand Lake O'the Cherokees is located eight miles southeast of Fairland off S.H. 125. "We're four miles from S.H. 125," says Mr. Gray, "and then it's four miles to Fairland." Camp admission, which includes electricity, is \$7 for a family of four, \$6.30 for Good Sam members. For more information, call (918) 676-3332.

Okmulgee State Park sits six miles west of U.S. 75 on S.H. 56. The fee for water and electric hookup is \$10, add a dollar to reserve sites. For more information, call (918) 756-5971.

Strayhorn Landing can be found north of Tenkiller State Park off S.H. 100. Hookup fee (electric only) is \$10 a night. For more information, call (918) 487-5252.

Ft. Cobb State Park is on Highway 146, seven miles north of Ft. Cobb. Hookup fee is \$10 for electric and water, \$11 with a reservation. For information, call (405) 643-2249.

All state parks have special discounts for senior citizens and disabled persons.

Oklahoma's Lakes and Camping Guide is handy for RVers planning a jaunt in Oklahoma. To order one, write: Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, 500 Will Rogers Building, Oklahoma City 73105-4492 or call, (800) 652-6552.

Give An Oklahoma Gift.

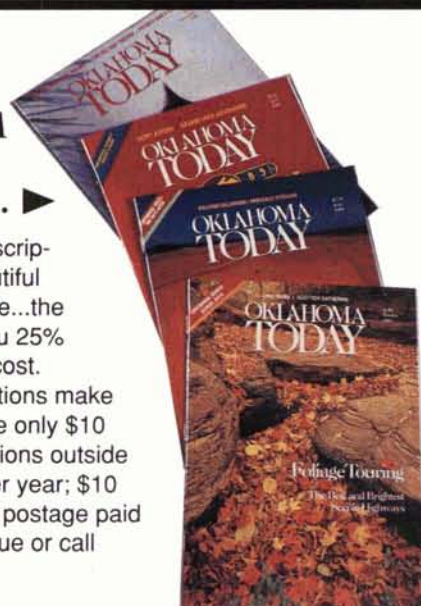


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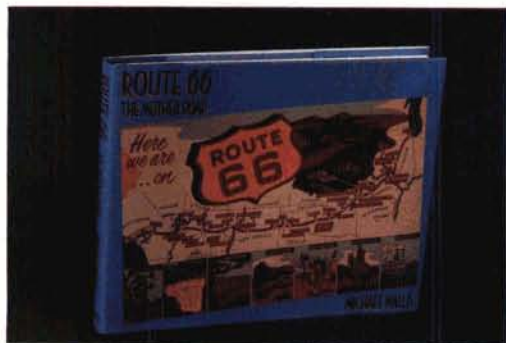
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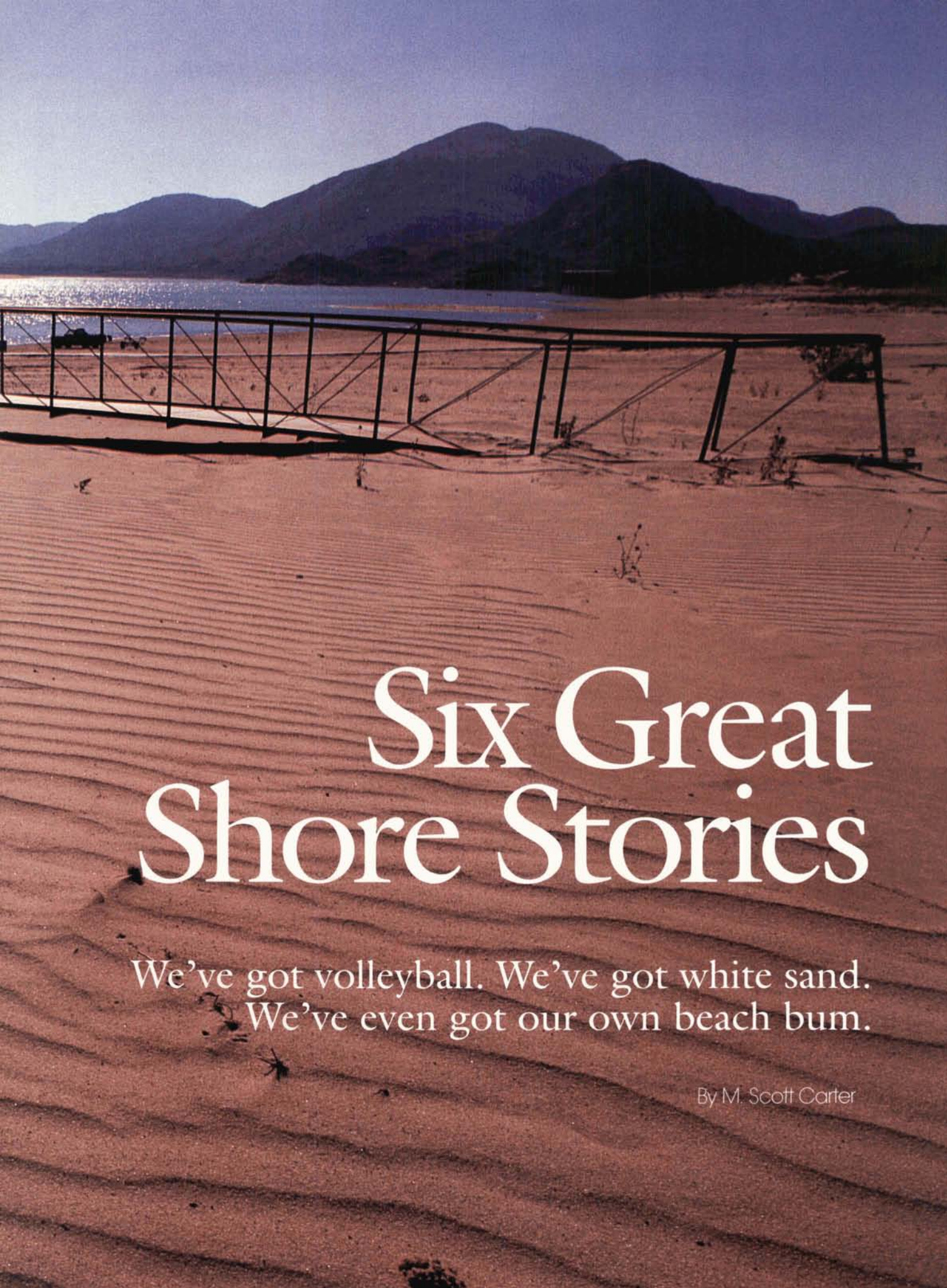
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A scenic photograph of a beach at dusk or dawn. In the foreground, there are rolling sand dunes with distinct wind-swept ripples. A wooden boardwalk with a metal railing runs horizontally across the middle ground. Beyond the boardwalk is a calm body of water reflecting the sky. In the background, a range of dark, silhouetted mountains rises against a clear, deep blue sky.

Six Great Shore Stories

We've got volleyball. We've got white sand.
We've even got our own beach bum.

By M. Scott Carter



The beach at Shangri-La at Grand Lake comes complete with fine white sand, a grass hut, beach chairs and the occasional Hawaiian luau.

When I told my wife I had been assigned to write a feature about the beaches of Oklahoma, she laughed. It wasn't just a brief chuckle. Hers was a loud, deep belly laugh that echoed off the walls of our house.

"The beaches of Oklahoma," she said, fighting back another 4.3 Richter-scale guffaw.

"Where?"

And, with that, she returned to her reading.

"Oklahoma has some marvelous beaches," I insisted, with all the confidence expected of a native Oklahoman.

Her response: a withering stare.

I wasn't defeated. I knew given a few weekends, a tank full of gas and some insider tips on the beaches of Okla-

homa that I could not only win this argument, but come home with a nice tan in the process. Or, as U.S. Corps of Engineers spokesman Edward Engelke likes to say, with 31 lakes and 6,768 miles of shoreline in Oklahoma: "There's a lot of water out there."

Now Oklahoma as lake country isn't news. Most Oklahomans know we rival Minnesota for the title, "Land of Many Lakes." What people like my wife don't realize, however, is that Oklahoma has quietly made some inroads on Florida and California. There are lakes in Oklahoma that by some quirk of fate have natural, yes, natural sandy beaches. And, in recent years, ingenious Oklahomans have taken to assisting Mother Nature by covering otherwise dirt shores with pearly white sand from out-of-state. (Oklahoma import-

ing sand. Now that puts a whole new twist on John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*.)

The end result could make Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon feel right at home. Lake Texoma Resort now hosts beach parties. There are volleyball games on soft sand at Lake Tenkiller. And at Lake Murray in the southern part of the state most lake diversions take place at the intersection of Beachfront and Waterside.

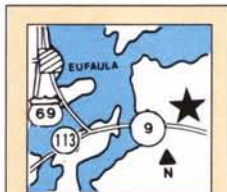
Waikiki watch out.

And so I put my wife in the car and set out. By the time our search for Oklahoma beaches was over, I realized that Oklahoma not only had beaches it had six of the greatest shores to be found (at least for any land-locked state).

Or, as my wife so aptly put it, "Wow, we're three hours away from paradise."

Number Nine Cove At Lake Eufaula

If Oklahoma history books ever want to pinpoint the year the Sooner State began to emerge as a rival to other beach-blessed states, the folks in Eufaula would



Cove 9 at Lake Eufaula is located north off S.H. 9. For more information, call (918) 689-2791.

be happy to tell them it was 1987, the year that *Playboy* magazine listed the Number Nine Cove on Lake Eufaula as one of "America's Best Fresh-Water Beaches."

"It was in its July issue," one man recalled. "The one that read, 'Beach Party: 20 pages of Sun, Surf & Sex.'"

Back in 1987, says Jim Holderfield, the supervisory park ranger at Lake Eufaula, that magazine headline summed up the atmosphere at Number Nine Cove, then the headquarters for local bikini-clad teens. "It was a fairly rowdy beach," Holderfield admits.

The park banned alcohol at the beach, and the teens moved on. Families began to frequent the Number Nine Cove a year or two ago, and Holderfield felt his efforts were validated when the beach won an endorsement from *Family Circle*. "Everybody should be able to use a beach," he reasons.

The Number Nine Cove remains a gorgeous sandy beach, strewn with driftwood. But Holderfield says Lake Eufaula has at least eight beaches that deserve five stars—not counting the remote sandy beaches accessible only by boat.

The Eufaula city beach, which sits on one side of a cove, has become a mecca for sun worshippers and the younger set. Beach-goers can play in two-man volleyball tournaments, wind surf, rent jet skis, slip down the waterslide at the nearby amusement park

or dine on the shady deck of the Salty Pelican. There is even a bathhouse. It's easy to see why Eufaulans feel they've got the corner on the beach market. "If you want to get away from the crowds you get a boat and go a little ways and you'll find a secluded beach," says Les Hall, Main Street director for Eufaula. "If you want to play volleyball you just strike up a conversation and pretty soon you're playing volleyball—if you're any good."

Bonfires and glass containers are no nos at all Eufaula beaches and there are no lifeguards, but alcohol is allowed—save for the Number Nine Cove. And admission is free.

Observes Hall, "I've been on beaches all over the world and I've never found any better."

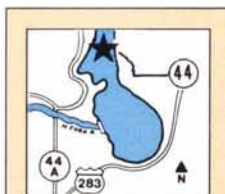
The North Shore At Lake Altus

In years when the lake level cooperates, probably no beach in the state is more spectacular than the North Shore at Lake Altus, where the naturally sandy shore yields first to azure water, then a jagged horizon of purple mountains and, finally, the Oklahoma sky.

"It's the nicest beach in the state," proudly claims J.D. Carpenter, park manager for Quartz Mountain State Park.

"When it's there," adds Vicky Mason, park naturalist.

For the size of the North Shore beach at Lake Altus can fluctuate between a half-mile or more of shoreline to a beach the size of a postage stamp, depending on whether the water level of



Lake Altus is located in southwestern Oklahoma near Lone Wolf. The North Shore is located off S.H. 44 or S.H. 9. For more information, call (405) 563-2238.

He Sells Sandals By The Seashore

If a good salesman can sell ice to Eskimos, how good does a salesman have to be to sell beach products in Oklahoma?

Chuck Coulter's that good.

In a state smack in the center of the country, a hard day's drive from the nearest saltwater, Coulter is making a living selling beach sandals and sunglasses cords. His company's name, ONO's Beachware, Ltd., puts one more in mind of swaying palms than shady oaks.

Despite all that, customers of Coulter's year-old company already stretch from St. Thomas to Santa Barbara, California. Florida resorts stock his products and Disneyland sells his rope sandals in Safari Land.

Beach products seem like a natural for the easygoing Coulter, whose conversation is peppered with aphorisms like, "What goes around, comes around." His nickname, ONO, ("It stands for the one and only," he says grinning.) inspired the company's name.

Daughter Jenna, 6, hangs out at the Tulsa offices, taping boxes and counting sunglasses cords. "I'm having a ball," Coulter says.

His flagship products are six-strap rope sandals, "the kind hippies made," and a two-strap rope sandal designed by Coulter. The company also wholesales sunglasses cords, IkordZ, and a rip-stop nylon sport watchband, SportbandZ. He's developed a few beach wearables, like paperbag waist beach pants. ONO's products retail at ONO's Beachware and Salon, 1626 S. Boston in Tulsa. Though his products turn up on famous beaches, the photographs for ONO's ads are shot on an isolated beach, just off the old Prue Road, on the east side of Lake Keystone.

For the record, as unusual as a beach products company in Oklahoma may be, Coulter probably gets more raised eyebrows when he talks about his second venture.

It's a crawfish farm.

—Barbara Palmer

the lake is up or down in any given summer.

When it's up, Mason says, "it can feel like 50,000 people on the same spot."

When it's down, however, the beach stretches like an antique-white veil along the water's edge. The beach can swell to a point that years ago locals trooped down to the North Shore for huge sand-building contests. Nothing so organized goes on now, Mason says, but there are still days when the water recedes and the beach takes over and little children—and not so little children—commence to building with sand. Says J.D. Carpenter, "I've seen some elaborate sand castles out there."

The North Shore has a bathhouse, adjacent to a few picnic tables, but be forewarned there's no camping, no campfires, no glass containers and no fancy beach accoutrements, like volleyball poles or lifeguards. Admission to the beach area, however, is free.

And though the North Shore can teem with people on a hot weekend afternoon, Mason says, no place is better for a quiet walk on the beach in the early morning.

Central State Beach At Arcadia Lake

"Arcadia Lake is a place where people bring their lawn chairs and air mattresses and just get oiled," observes Bob Jenni of the Arcadia Lake, Fish and Game Commission. "It's a meeting place."

Read: a hotbed of beach fun.

With three beaches, each the size of a football field and each covered with more than 500 tons of fine-grained imported river sand, Arcadia Lake draws crowds in numbers reminiscent of

Jones Beach on Long Island.

Not bad for a lake only three years old.

Central State Beach, like its sister beaches Edmond Park and Spring Creek Park, is equipped with volleyball nets, flush toilets, a changing house, outside rinse showers and a playground for when the children need a break from the water.

The Edmond Park and Recreation Department imports fresh sand each summer before Memorial Day, says Tom Bailey, city recreation assistant, which guarantees beach potatoes plenty of the white stuff in which to romp or bury Mom and Dad. "It's the best lake in central Oklahoma for swim beaches," says Bailey.

And the busiest.

During the summer months, particularly on weekends, beach towels form a rainbow quilt across the shore. Swimming in the designated swim area can sometimes be limited to standing in waist deep water and splashing oneself. "Elbow to elbow" is an apt description.

Ironically, that just seems to enhance the beach's appeal. "It's a great place to meet people," explains Gil Hamilton, an Oklahoma City resident and an admitted Arcadia Lake addict. "Heck I went there two summers ago, met this great gal, and now, two years later I'm married."

Central Beach plays up its gregarious reputation. On the Fourth of July, Central Beach hosts KTNT radio station's annual beach party and live broadcast. The station gives away t-shirts, hauls in a concession and sound machine and hosts a series of volleyball contests.

Surprise: the Fourth of July is Central Beach's busiest day of the year.

Frisbees, suntan oil and air mattresses are welcome at Central Beach, but leave the glass containers, alcoholic beverages and pets at home. You swim at your own risk (There are no lifeguards) and admission is \$4 per day per car. "People complain about the fees until they come out and see how clean and well-kept the beach is," says

Bailey.

Or we might add until you deduce that by the station wagon that's just a few bits a head.

Shangri-La At Grand Lake

If someone were to tell you Oklahoma had a beach where you could sip on one of those silly tropical drinks with little umbrellas while lounging on a beach chair in full view of a grass hut, you'd probably have them checked for sun stroke.

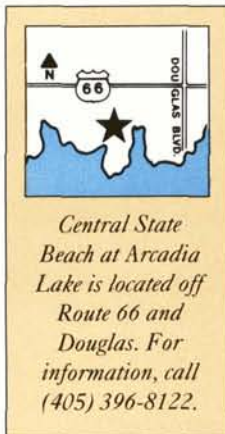
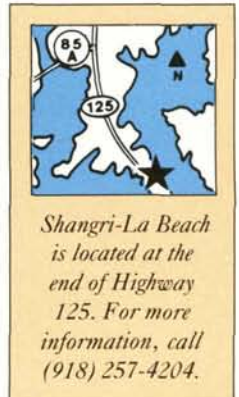
And you'd be way out of line.

For at Shangri-La Beach, which sits on a scenic peninsula that juts out into Grand Lake O'the Cherokees, that's exactly what you can expect to find.

On big weekends, such as Labor Day and the Fourth of July, this pristine white shore is turned over to beach parties and volleyball games. Other times, it's not unusual to stumble onto a Hawaiian luau.

In fact, says Sam Parkhill, director of sales and marketing for the Shangri-La Resort, the tropical atmosphere is so authentic that last year when the resort hired a marina employee from Hawaii, they couldn't get him off the beach. "He was a real typical beach bum with that white (zinc oxide) stuff on his nose," says Parkhill. "He was Mr. Tan. He'd get up volleyball games and when it got cold he disappeared."

Shangri-La cultivates its image as a tropical getaway. The resort hauled in 1,200 tons of white sand to build its beach, and replenishes it each summer. It stocks big beach umbrellas and what Parkhill calls "butt boards," a takeoff of



In Oklahoma, when someone yells, "Surf's up," they're talking windsurfing.





By Memorial Day, the volleyball nets go up at Central State Beach at Arcadia Lake and they don't come down until fall.

a surf board used in Hawaii that lets a person look below the water's surface while paddling in the lake. And there is the 1,300-mile shoreline of Grand Lake. In fact, when the wind is up you can get three-foot lake swells with white caps—Oklahoma's answer to waves.

Windsurfers are a common sight off Shangri-La Beach, and visitors can also rent jet skis. If that sounds too active for your taste, there are beach-front concessions and plenty of lounge chairs just waiting for you in the sand.

And, in this tropical setting soaking up the landscape may be the best pastime going.

Sandy Cove Beach At Canton Lake

In a state where most beaches have to import their sand or jealously guard what natural sand they've got, Sandy Cove Beach at Canton Lake is an anomaly.

"It surprises



Sandy Cove Beach at Canton Lake is located east of S.H. 58. For directions, please call (405) 886-2989.

people," says Ernest Martin, project manager for the 8,000-acre lake, "but we haul sand out."

The shore at this lake is unusual in another way too. Half of the 50 miles of shoreline is natural white, sandy beaches. The other half, red dirt.

"We tried to build a beach on the west shore," recalls Martin. "It has red mud and we put sand on it, but the mud just walked through the sand."

The idea was ditched.

Today, Canton Lake has sandy beaches on its north and east sides. West and south, red mud rules. A few sandy islands in the middle of the lake are the only exceptions to what has be-

come the general way of thinking about beaches at Canton Lake.

Sandy Cove Beach is never closed. But its popularity rises with the mercury. In fact, the beach is so popular on summer weekends that there's usually little room for anything but sitting on a beach towel. People are welcome to bring their frisbees and volleyball nets, but, Martin candidly says, he doesn't know where they'd put them. "The beach is so full there's not room for that kind of thing," he says.

A changing house (no showers) is on site as are restrooms, a large covered picnic shelter and a designated swim area. No glass containers or alcohol are allowed, Martin says, "because this is more of a family beach." (Leave the dog at home, too.)

You won't find a lifeguard on duty at Sandy Cove Beach, but a local deputy from the sheriff's department patrols the shore.

Asked whether Sandy Cove Beach approaches a football field in size, Martin hesitates. "It's a triangular beach," he says, slowly. "I'm trying to cut a football field up and put it in there."

A pause.

"Yep," Martin declares. "A football field would be close."

Taylor Ferry At Ft. Gibson Lake

If this was Florida, then Taylor Ferry at Ft. Gibson Lake would be Ft. Lauderdale.

Beachwise, that is.

Here on any weekend when the temperature nudges above 85 degrees, you can find 400 to 500 oil-slated teenagers bask-



Taylor Ferry at Ft. Gibson Lake is located north off S.H. 51 just before you cross a large bridge and before the entrance to Western Hills. For directions or more information, call (918) 682-4314.

COURTESY U.S. CORPS OF ENGINEERS



Building sandcastles is a family affair at Sandy Cove Beach at Canton Lake.

ing in the sun, diving after volleyballs, flipping around frisbees or cruising the parking lot with the tops down on their convertibles—all against a rock 'n' roll soundtrack.

You can't help but feel as if you've stumbled onto the set of an old Gidget movie. The only prop missing is a surfboard. And if you count wind surfboards, nothing's missing.

Beach parties tend to be spontaneous. "Someone says, 'Let's go to the beach,'" says Bryan Arnall, a 17-year-old from nearby Hulbert, "and they're gone."

"We stay four to five hours or until we burn so crisp we can't stand it," adds Jerry Copeland, 18.

Located at the site of an old ferry crossing, the Taylor Ferry Beach started small, when the U.S. Corp of Engineers first built it in the late '70s. Demand has made it what it is today. And what it is is a very well-thought-out beach. Two bathhouses, two restrooms, picnic shelters and a playground are separated by the beach parking lot. A snack bar is located at the Taylor Ferry Marina on the north end of the beach. And a string of orange buoys keeps swimmers safe from boats. Poles for volleyball nets can be found

dead center.

"There's normally at least one volleyball game going on the big weekends," says Jim Montgomery, U.S. Corps of Engineers park ranger.

Everything at this beach is so conveniently located and the white sand so soft beachcombers easily pad from water's edge to destination in barefeet. "It's the best beach anywhere around here," boasts Montgomery.

It's definitely a big beach. Montgomery estimates Taylor Ferry Beach stretches 150 yards north and south and about 50 yards from water to parking lot. Its size makes it possible for families and teens to coexist peacefully and for motorists to see its colorful display from nearby S.H. 51. "A lot of passersby stop in to see what's going on," says Montgomery.

There is no admission to Taylor Ferry Beach, no camping or fires on the beach and no lifeguard.

Montgomery also has one rule of his own: "They can play music as long as it's not too loud." 

M. Scott Carter is an Oklahoma City writer. David Koelsch, Jim Argo and Stephen Holman are Oklahoma City photographers.



The Tall- Grass Prairie

An ocean of bluestem in a sea of sky

Photographs by Harvey Payne

As a boy, Harvey Payne took for granted the waving oceans of big bluestem, the vast blue skies and the undulating high country of the Flint Hills in Osage County. "I thought the whole world looked that way," recalls the Pawhuska attorney. "I hadn't been anywhere else."

When law school took him to Norman, Payne got a rude awakening: There were not only places in the world where it was impossible to look without seeing a manmade intrusion, but they were the norm.

Not the exception.

Payne returned home intent upon getting to know better the tallgrass prairie's individual players—the 250 varieties of plants, the 300 species of birds, the 80 different mammals that make it like no other grassland in the world.

That was two decades ago.

What Harvey Payne has seen and photographed in the years since could fill a book—prairie chickens on their ancestral booming grounds, eagles soaring above a sea of switchgrass, coyotes howling at an August moon, the relentless encroachment of man on his beloved prairie.

The latter has been hardest for him to swallow. Left to evolve at the whim of man, Payne knew the tallgrass prairie of

his childhood would eventually be subdivided away. "It would happen in time," Payne recalls thinking, "as sure as daylight and dark."

That realization evoked such a sense of urgency in the young lawyer that Payne tried to rekindle the prairie ecosystem in a small pasture, which had never been plowed, on his ranch in Osage County. The willingness



Indiangrass and big bluestem can top 10 feet. Payne has personally measured stalks 8 feet 4 inches tall. Above, rancher Dick Whetsell in a towering stand of bluestem.





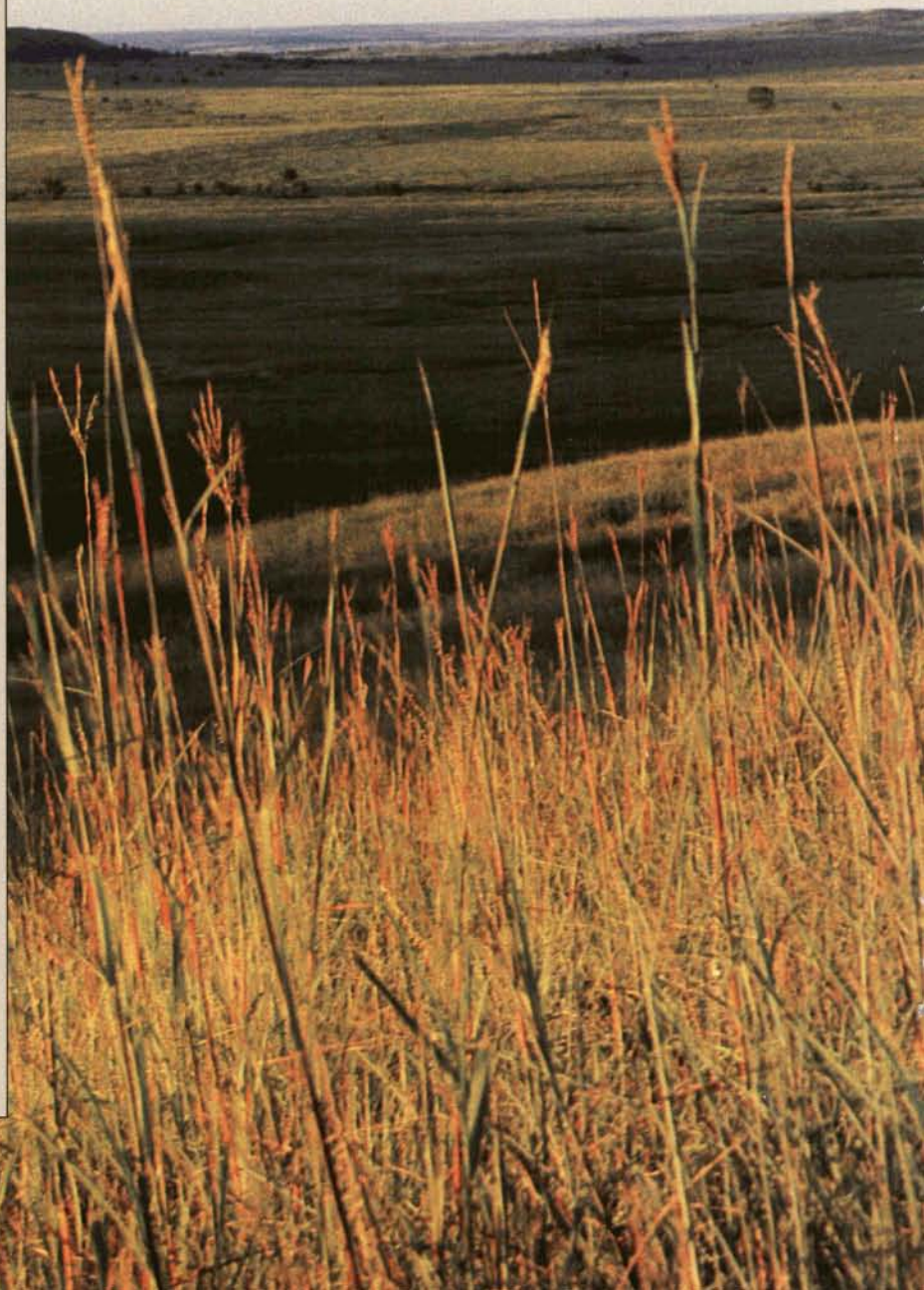
of that little plot to go back to wildflowers and big bluestem convinced Payne that returning the prairie to its original grandeur—before bison had yielded to cattle, before Indians had given way to ranchers—was possible.

Yet ten years ago, when the government was trying to establish a 320,000-acre Tallgrass Prairie National Park by condemning farm and ranch land in Kansas and Oklahoma, there was no louder opponent than Harvey Payne. "The only letter I've ever written was opposing that," says Payne, who is a fourth-generation landowner. "Condemning 300,000 to 350,000 acres of land in Oklahoma and Kansas. Gosh, I thought that was terrible."

In 1984, when environmentalists again began to press for a prairie preserve, this time just northwest of Pawhuska, Harvey Payne was still against a park, the threat to the local tax base, the idea of Uncle Sam as a neighbor. "I think if you had taken a vote that first meeting (of the local task force) we probably all would have turned it down and gone home," he says.

Instead, the group of cattlemen, businessmen and Osage leaders (Payne was the token environmentalist) set out to educate itself. By the time Payne and his cohorts had

Working cowboys should always remain part of the prairie landscape in Oklahoma thanks to plans to include a herd of cattle on a 25,000-acre buffer preserve.









talked with ranchers who grazed cattle in the Grand Tetons and landowners in the Badlands of South Dakota, the group had switched sides, won over by the economic benefits and the idea that the project could be done by buying land already for sale. Local dissenters still existed, but now there were also locals pushing for the park.

By the summer of 1988, that was a moot point. When the Sierra Club upped and tried to increase the size of the proposed park, Congressman Mickey Edwards retaliated by withdrawing his support for the project. The proposed park went up in smoke with the speed of an August prairie fire ripping through a growth of Indiangrass.

For awhile, not so much as an ember of activity could be found.

Then, the Nature Conservancy, a private environmental organization which had pushed for the park, stepped in last June and bought the 30,000-acre Barnard Ranch as the nucleus of the 52,000-acre preserve it hopes to establish this year. The Conservancy takes control of the Barnard Ranch in November. It plans to remove all cattle, most fences and other signs of man. It will then let the prairie rest for a few years, after which it will introduce a herd of bison, a critical step in reestablishing the natural ecosystem of a

Bison, not cattle, are prairie natives. Overgrazing has left areas adjacent to the preserve a fog of broomweed.





tallgrass prairie.

If Payne's backyard experiment is any indication, the prairie should rebound quickly. The very thought leaves Payne almost speechless. "I remember as a boy sitting on my horse on top of a hill and wondering how this place looked back when the Indians were here a couple hundred years ago," he reflects. "I never really thought I'd have a chance to see it that way. But the Conservancy is really going to roll the clock back."

Almost immediately, the prairie will be opened to the public. A brochure already exists; the county road that loops lazily through the initial 30,000-acres of the Conservancy's spread is now the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Drive; interpretive signs grace scenic pull-offs; and plans call for the preserve itself to find its way onto the state map.

Harvey Payne knows the influx of tourists will change his own prairie experience. "I know the days of walking for hours and not seeing anybody else are gone," he says. "But I can live with that."

"It was nice to have it to myself, but that was temporary."

—Jeanne M. Devlin

There are hilltops in the preserve where prairie chickens have gathered to court for centuries. Their booming grounds literally boom in spring.

AN UNLIKELY WORLD LEADER

*In the YMCA Jim Bellatti found a way
to make a global difference.*

There are few things in this world that make Jim Bellatti nervous. Having his telephone off the hook, one quickly realizes, is one. On this Tuesday morning, the Stillwater businessman is having his picture taken. There are bright lights flashing in his face. Two out-of-town guests are haphazardly rearranging his personal belongings, including an old photo of his late father, and, yet, Jim Bellatti's attention has been caught by a telephone buried under a stack of paper.

"My telephone's off the hook!"

Two blank looks greet his observation. (Who can even see the telephone?)

"Could you put the receiver back on?" Bellatti instructs, a mite impatiently.

Four of six lights on the telephone are blazing even as the out-of-towner complies. The receiver barely hits the holder before the phone is buzzed. As Bellatti answers it, he relaxes back into his chair. Once more, he is happily connected to the world.

By Scott Carlberg
Photography by Joe Mills



Jim Bellatti is the co-publisher of the *Stillwater NewsPress*, a family-oriented newspaper (circulation 11,000) in a small college town in north central Oklahoma. He is no Kay Graham. Yet he has sat poolside discussing education with Uganda's Idi Amin, debated values with officials of Russia's Communist Youth Organization and worked shoulder to shoulder with Korea's Minister of Sports before the 1988 Summer Olympics.

Bellatti's entree to heads of state?

Not his newspaper. But the YMCA.

From 1985-1988, Bellatti was president of the Geneva, Switzerland-based YMCA World Alliance, the 135-year-old governing body of the Young Men's Christian Association. Or as most refer to it, "the Y."

Bellatti is one of only three Americans ever to hold the post. And, you could say, the job has made him a diplomat of sorts. The YMCA organizes youth basketball in Des Moines, Iowa, teaches welding in Senegal, cooking in Thailand, English in Taiwan and free enterprise in Western Samoa and it has initiated critical dialogue between races in South Africa. As World Alliance president, all this fell under Bellatti's watch.

"The YMCA is a group of people dedicated to spreading the love of Jesus Christ," says Bellatti. "We believe his love is meant for all of God's creatures and all his people are brothers and sisters, no matter the color of their skin."

Some of the best training Bellatti ever got for his international post was not garnered abroad but in Oklahoma during the racially tense times of the late '60s and early '70s. At one point, he says, blacks were coming to the Oklahoma State campus in Stillwater from all over the state to demonstrate. City fathers, Bellatti included, worried about the possibility of violence. "Our goal was to get people together—show that racism has no place in our community. I knew one of the pastors of a black church where blacks were to have a meeting. I went to their meeting, by myself. Just being there helped, I think. We talked and listened, and I found that 94 percent of the time we all agreed on the same values."

He has used a similar style with his YMCA dealings, since the beginning of his volunteer career in 1957 on the Stillwater YMCA organizing committee. Even in a middle-class community like Stillwater, the going hasn't always been easy, he points out. For instance in the early days, the Stillwater YMCA didn't have a building. It met in local schools. "For swimming lessons," Bellatti adds, "I called people and asked to use their home pools. We did whatever we could to get the program going."

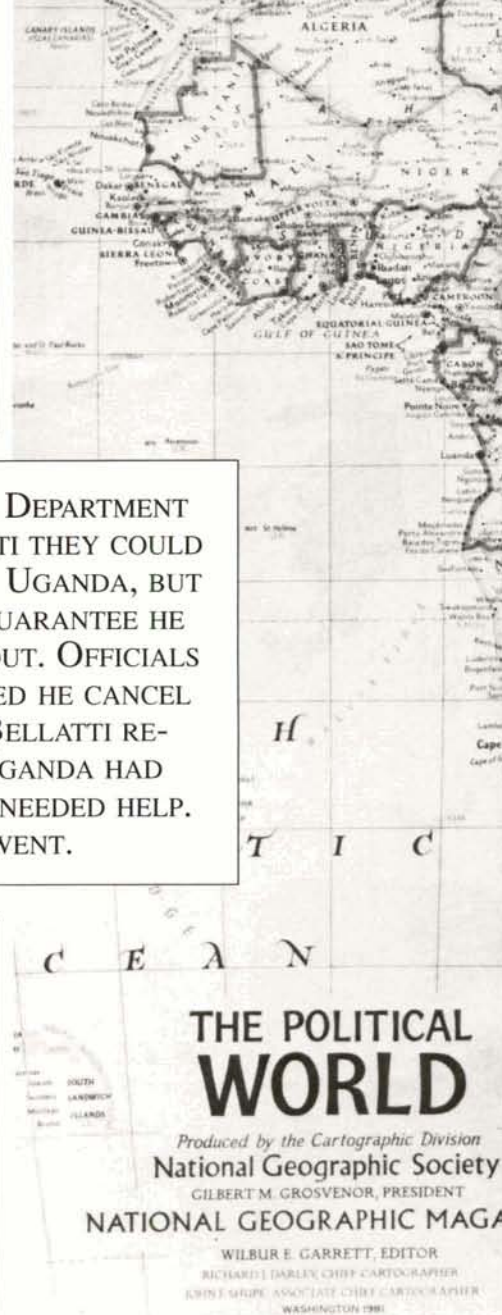
His own philosophy then, as now, was: Keep people reading, talking, listening. "People have to keep talking in order to solve the problems in the world today," he says.

His other credo? Make it happen, but don't take the credit. Rarely will you hear Bellatti take credit for his breakthroughs with the YMCA. He prefers to let you believe that everything just happened to work out. But in the real world, things don't just "work out."

For instance, the YMCA was a critical force in the Middle East during his tenure. There, the Jerusalem International YMCA is part of the USA branch of the Y. It serves everyone. The West Bank YMCA is Arab-Christian and was built in Jordan after the 1947 war. The Nazareth YMCA is a Christian and Arab coalition, run by Christians for everyone. "The challenge," Bellatti explains, "is that these organizations represent political concerns, not Christian issues to these people. We had a difficult time trying to get adults from different religions to interact. They had a fear of even being seen together, because of what the extreme factions of their sect might do to them."

Bellatti says that when the adults wouldn't talk, the answer was easy. "We had a Youth Peace Conference—Jews, Muslims, atheists, Arabs and

THE STATE DEPARTMENT TOLD BELLATTI THEY COULD GET HIM INTO UGANDA, BUT COULDN'T GUARANTEE HE WOULD GET OUT. OFFICIALS RECOMMENDED HE CANCEL THE TRIP. BELLATTI RETORTED: UGANDA HAD PEOPLE WHO NEEDED HELP. HE WENT.



Christians. We found they were tired of the tradition, 'Your family did this to my family seven hundred years ago.' If we can break that pattern with the youth we have a chance for real peace."

The Y's next goal in the Middle East, he says, is to establish a World Alliance office in Jerusalem to help people share views of human rights and peace.

The importance of that to Bellatti? "Many people don't understand that they can make a difference if they are willing to risk change," he says.

Bellatti understands change and knows positive change has to sit on bedrock. "You have to take it one step



at a time, and the change has to be a local idea—no one should try to force his expectations on other people. That's why each YMCA tries to serve the local community—people needs."

If it seems a broad mission, remember that the YMCA is truly a "world alliance." Operating in more than 100 countries, the YMCA World Alliance has forced Bellatti to become a world player. In 1973, at his first worldwide YMCA council in Kampala, Uganda, Bellatti remembers Idi Amin pulling up a chair poolside beside him and his friends. "He was an amazing man. One minute he was kind, talking about his concerns for education and advance-

ment for his people. The next minute he spoke like a tyrant."

Bellatti says this was one of his first lessons in foreign cultures: "In Amin's tribe, kindness is a weakness. Deep down, he wanted what was best for his country, but he was torn between the cultural face he had to wear and what he wanted for Uganda's people."

Bellatti's son, Rick, remembers that the Uganda trip taught him a lot about his father, too: "The State Department told Dad that they could make sure he got into Uganda, but couldn't guarantee that he would get out. They recommended that he cancel the trip. Dad told them that Uganda had people

who needed help. He went."

Bellatti's rise in the YMCA was from the bottom up. His first experience with the organization was like many other people's. "I first remember YMCAs when I was five years old," says Bellatti. "When my family took a vacation, we stayed near the YMCA, went there for fun, and I remember thinking that the YMCA was a place where people had a good time."

But there were soon other YMCA encounters. Bellatti says one of his role models as a boy was a man—a pastor in Blackwell—who was a YMCA "missionary" in World War I. In time, that

man, Howard McDowell, became the head of the Oklahoma conference for Christians and Jews. "Reverend McDowell was like a second father to me," says Bellatti. "He was a person who believed and lived the same thing—that everyone has a special talent, their own worth, no matter what religion or color they are."

Through the years, Bellatti never forgot what he had learned from McDowell. He took it to heart and took it with him as he worked through local, regional and national projects for the YMCA. More than a decade of domestic and international work with the Y earned Bellatti a reputation as being a hard worker and a good listener.

In 1985, dozens of countries nominated him for the job of president of the YMCA World Alliance—a job he didn't seek. In fact, another American had already been nominated for the top spot. When Bellatti, however, learned of the groundswell of support, he said he'd take the job if the United States YMCA wanted him as president, too.

The U.S. movement said, "Yes."

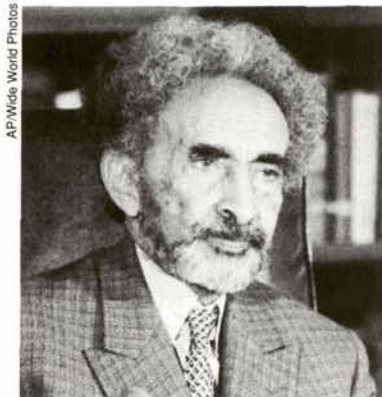
The irony of Bellatti's candidacy is that he was nominated by many foreign chapters at a time when America's character around the world was, at best, negative. Americans were perceived as domineering and brutish. Bellatti's universal support among YMCA delegates attests to the trust and respect he engenders. Once elected, Bellatti says, "I was always very conscious not to be the ugly American." (He took that personal promise so literally that he rarely traveled with a camera.)

Jim Bellatti may not have coveted the World Alliance post, but once elected he knew immediately what he wanted to accomplish. The first item on his agenda was to get out in the field and listen to what local YMCA officials had on their minds. He wanted to open the door to the highest official in the YMCA just like he had always maintained an open-door policy in his glass-enclosed office in Stillwater.

For the next three years, Bellatti maintained a traveling schedule—at his own expense—that would rival most world leaders. It didn't surprise those

who knew him well. "He's a real bulldog when he makes up his mind he wants to do something," says Bob McCormick, head of a Stillwater bank. "Jim is a person with a vision of how he'd like to see Stillwater and the world."

His determination is matched by the energy of a young pup. On a typical



AP/Wide World Photos

ON EMPEROR HAILE SELASIE OF ETHIOPIA: "I SAW HIM AS AN OLDER, GRACIOUS MAN—SMALL, BUT CARRIED HIMSELF AS A BIG LEADER."

day, he is out the door at sunrise for a breakfast meeting, into the office to check the day's news, off to lunch with a newspaper client or civic committee, back to the paper, then home for dinner and, finally, an evening with a briefcase full of papers, or another civic meeting.

This person who brings together diverse factions from around the world has many facets to his character, too. Oklahoma-born Bellatti is as middle American as one of his favorite meals, a thick steak and baked potato. But it is telling that he is also said to appreciate the subtleties of the 12-course Japanese meals he has been served during trips to the Pacific Rim. Understated coat and tie are his dress code for business meetings. But don't flinch if you see him decked out in a bright Filipino shirt and sandals on a hot Oklahoma afternoon. "They're comfortable," says the practical Bellatti.

Bob Bellatti, Jim's father, was an Illinois farmer who moved to Norman to enroll in the first class of the University of Oklahoma law school. Jim Bellatti's mother, Edith, was in the same class. Edith eventually dropped out of law school to care for the family she and Bob started. Nonetheless, Bellatti says, "Mother was



AP/Wide World Photos

ON IDI AMIN OF UGANDA: "HE'S A 'JEKYLL AND HYDE.' GRACIOUS AS A HOST FROM A POOR COUNTRY, BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE HAD HIS DEATH SQUADS OUT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE."

a woman who always went full speed forward. There was no neutral."

The couple moved to Blackwell in 1911. In Jim's words, his father "found a quiet way to work for the community." As a major shareholder in a Blackwell bank during the Depression, Bob Bellatti's personal funds quietly kept the bank doors open, and kept farmers and businesspeople trading instead of panicking.

Bob and Edith put out a newspaper—*The Blackwell Tribune*—from 1922 to 1940. Then they were ready for a change of scenery. They adopted a new hometown, Stillwater, and bought the *NewsPress* in 1941. Bob Bellatti became Chamber of Commerce president, helped bring radar and WAVE training to town in World War II, helped OSU prepare for the returning GIs and raised money to build a city airport.

All the while, the Bellatti household thrived on civic affairs, an expected

part of a newspaper editor's job. Oklahoma politicians—Robert Kerr, “Alfalfa Bill” Murray, Senator Josh Lee, Mike Monroney—regularly debated the issues of the day at the Bellatti dinner table. The politicians also heard the voice of the people through the editor of the newspaper, Bob Bellatti. “My father let politicians know how

AP/Wide World Photos



ON TEDDY KOPEK,
MAYOR OF JERUSALEM:
“VERY OUTSPOKEN, ABLE
TO DEAL WITH EXTREMISTS
FROM HIS OWN AND OTHER
RELIGIONS. I LIKE HIS
OPENNESS AND CANDOR.”

they were expected to help the public,” says Jim Bellatti.

His son, Rick, says his father sets high expectations, too. “Just because the family owns the company doesn’t guarantee me a paycheck,” Rick Bellatti observes. “My first job was cleaning our radio station and reading commercials during the Harry Carey baseball broadcasts in the ‘60s. When I misread a commercial, I’d hear Dad’s voice come across the two-way radio from his car asking, ‘What’s going on in there!’”

“A misuse of talent or resources upsets me,” admits Bellatti. “Talent should be used to make a difference.”

He’s a realist. While Bellatti shares the Oklahoma traits of candor and inquisitiveness, he doesn’t share the viewpoint of one Oklahoma favorite son: “I’m not like Will Rogers,” says Bellatti. “I’ve met people I don’t like. I can love them forever, but I don’t have to like what they do.”

It was that way in Mexico in 1969 during his first international encounter with the YMCA. While working with the heads of several YMCAs in leadership training, Bellatti says he saw a dichotomy between two Mexican YMCAs he visited: “Here is a country with extreme poverty and a huge population, and we were taken to a very nice YMCA, as nice as any you’d see in the United States. This Mexican YMCA served the upper class. It seemed wrong to serve the upper class when so many people were poor. Then we were taken to the YMCA in a poor part of town. This facility served the people of the slums. These volunteers helped people learn to read and write. What I learned was that the luxurious YMCA generated revenue to support the poor YMCA.”

The lesson: There’s more than one way to support a YMCA. There have been other thought-provoking times in Bellatti’s international journeys.

In Brazil: where he debated the economic benefits and drawbacks of a shoe factory in the Amazon Basin. Was a 25-cent-an-hour wage fair, even if the wage is vastly more money than many Amazon citizens ever dreamed of having?

Tahiti: Bellatti met with the minister of education from this South Pacific island nation who wanted to begin a university on the island. Bellatti said what the minister didn’t want to hear: The island needs basic training for an uneducated workforce, not a prestigious university when there are no potential students. Today, the island has started the training and hopes for a university sometime in the future.

Dreams of what “can be” are happening in countries previously off-limits to the YMCA. Bellatti cautiously monitors the reemergence of the YMCA in Cuba: “I want it to go slowly,” he says, “so I know it won’t be used as a political tool.” A YMCA is also opening in Leningrad.

In an uneasy world of Communist officials, native tribesmen, ancient rivals and heads of state, Jim Bellatti savors each victory as a sign of change—no matter how small. He still talks about

the time the YMCA was chosen to construct and begin operating a vocational education center in Senegal. The YMCA was the one organization the government and people trusted to handle the donated money. In 1983, Jim Bellatti went on television in Senegal to announce that he was turning over the YMCA keys to the citizens trained to run the vo-tech school.

Senegal is an example of how the YMCA commonly can cut through the rhetoric and noise of bureaucracies. “The YMCA can cross borders because it is an organization known for meeting people’s needs rather than imposing a religion on people, even though we are a Christian organization,” says Bellatti. “Even the State Department has encouraged our activity. That’s because the YMCA addresses people needs rather than selling a philosophy.”

The YMCA operates internationally the same way that Jim Bellatti does in person. “You’ve got to be willing to listen,” he says, “and have no self agenda. A person works best when he understands the context of the situation where he’s working, then makes the first step.”

For Bellatti, as well as the YMCA, the first step is to extend a helping hand to someone else. That’s opened the door to useful discussions for Bellatti and the YMCA. “What starts as a polite 15-minute meeting between a president of the YMCA and a world leader will last more than an hour,” he says. “The conversation flows because we find we are both Christians.”

For many, what Jim Bellatti has done at age 62 would be enough. But not for Jim Bellatti. He’s a bulldog. He has more to do.

“You’re never really satisfied with yourself,” he admits. “I often reflect on what I could have said or done differently, and how it may have improved a situation. There’s always a way to make things better.”



Scott Carlberg is a writer in Bartlesville; he works for the Phillips Petroleum Co. Joe Mills is a photographer who lives in Oklahoma City.



JUST DO IT.

By Stephen Berg

Photographs by Gary
Lawson

Tim Nall from Tulsa crosses the "Heebie Jeebies," an intimidating network of cables stretching 30 feet above the ground. Nall wears a rope-climbing harness and a rope attached to a cable. It's safe, say course leaders. But scary.

**The challenge
in this course is
to find yourself.**

"Are you ready?" Larry Harper yelled.
"YES!" They answered.
"Are you sure?" he yelled.

"YES!"

"NO!"

"WAIT!"

"Okay. Hold it! Hold it!" said Dave Ward, the ringleader in this most unusual of scenarios.

A discussion ensues.

Meanwhile, Larry Harper, scoutmaster for Troop 185, is standing with his hands clasped across his chest. His feet are planted on a small wooden platform that is attached to a tree about four feet above the ground. In a few seconds, he'll deliberately topple backward off the platform. With any luck, his troop, along with assorted fathers, will be waiting. Their job: To catch Harper and prevent what would certainly be a most painful plunge onto the ground below.

It's called the "Trust Fall."

But right now, there are some dissenters in the group.

On this splendidly sunny morning, the scouts and their dads have ventured to Camp Redlands, a rustic compound of buildings nestled among rolling hills and scrub oak forest just north of Lake Carl Blackwell, about eight miles northwest of Stillwater as the crow flies. Their agenda: To experience the Oklahoma State University Outdoor Adventure Ropes Course.

As participants, they will be asked to negotiate obstacles, shimmy up rope ladders and put themselves in otherwise unnatural situations. Whether it be walking blindfolded as part of a human chain or dancing above the ground on high wires, more times than not this program delivers a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But the program is

not about cheap thrills. The theory is that encounters outside one's comfort zone, when experienced as part of a group, foster teamwork and bolster self-confidence in individuals.

Without becoming too philosophical, the program is a metaphor for life. The high wires are a simulation of the obstacles people face in everyday living. By mastering the obstacles here a person is encouraged to believe that he can come to grips with other more mundane obstacles in his life or career.

"By the end of the day, we want a couple of things to happen," said Kurt Wimberley, coordinator of OSU's Department of Outdoor Recreation. "We want them to recognize a challenge, ascertain it and see in themselves that they can do a little bit more than what they previously thought they could do."

The Camp Redlands course is a take-off of Project Adventure, the brainchild of two regional directors of nationally renowned Outward Bound who decided in the late '70s to bring the challenges of the wilderness into the schoolyard as an alternative physical education program, says Wimberley.

Wimberley visited Project Adventure at its home in the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District in Massachusetts in 1978. By the summer of 1979, he was building a course at Camp Redlands. In its first year, acceptance was slow here—in 16 days, 300 people used the course. But last year, more than 3,000 people went through the program during just one 170-day stretch.

The course's popularity has skyrocketed, says Wimberley, as people have increasingly sought ingenious ways to find themselves.

Calling the ropes course a ropes course is a bit misleading, because the program consists of obstacle courses and climbing exercises. Half of these exercises are known as low elements; the other, high-elements.

The Trust Fall is a low element, but that, too, is misleading, because if you



The "Trust Fall" is used to illustrate how trust is developed, bit by bit.

figure in Larry Harper's height along with that of the platform, his head is at least 10 feet off the ground. By his own account, Harper weighs 200 pounds-plus. His scouts average 12 years in age. Furthermore, Harper is the first person in the group to try the fall. Most of the adults have wisely been positioned near the platform to bear the brunt of the forthcoming impact, but the scouts are still wary. Consequently, Dave Ward, a former scout volunteering with his old troop for the day, intervenes to offer advice and an encouraging word.

Dave's instinctive reaction to the

group's unease is exactly the response the program tries to foster. "The ropes course has a tendency to bring out, in a playful atmosphere, kind of how we behave in real life under stressful situations," explained Wimberley.

The Boy Scouts were all fairly well-acquainted before they ever arrived at Wimberley's program, but other groups including corporations, college football teams, nonprofit organizations and church groups are common visitors at the camp. In such instances, the preliminary orientation session is vital. Nicknames are exchanged. Hence,

Dave Ward becomes "Daring Dave," Harper becomes "Hacker Harper," and so on. The nicknames are geared to helping an employer or peer see his associates or buddies in a new light. Additional enlightenment comes from working through the course together.

It all sounds rather frothy at first, and I harbored a healthy amount of skepticism the first time I heard Wimberley's spiel. Wimberley seemed unconcerned about having a Doubting Thomas in his midst. Back at the course, I found myself turning into the kid in class every teacher would like to muzzle. I snickered and chortled as I watched fathers and sons struggle across the low element known as the Track Walk, a series of inclined balance beams an inch-and-a-half wide.

Then, one of the dads goaded me into taking a try.

Confidently mounting the first beam, I took my first step only to begin flapping my arms in a vain effort to maintain my balance. Abandoning the beam would have been a given had it not been for the spotters on either side who repeatedly nudged my body back into place. And so, I continued, twisting and flailing across all six beams.

Remarkably, no ridicule emanated from the onlookers. Instead, they offered encouragement. Maybe they grasped the concept of the program better than I did. In any event, I finally, thankfully, dismounted, chagrined and silently wondering what the high-elements must be like.

Meanwhile, the group continued through the low-elements, which Wimberley describes as more group-oriented and designed to present problems to be solved. (High-elements are geared toward the individual and require nothing more than courage.) The initial efforts of the men and boys on one low element—known as the Islands of Dread because of its isolated platforms—were rather comical, and there was more than a little bickering as the guys, both young and old, tried to get from platform to platform without touching the ground. Soon their efforts

I finally, thankfully, dismounted, suitably chagrined and silently wondering what the high elements must be like.

began to mesh, however. While they were not yet a well-oiled machine, they soon moved more swiftly and deftly.

"You're talking, communicating. You're making decisions," Wimberley praised. "You're making plans, you're following through."

Such problem-solving aspects of the program appeal to corporations. In situations such as the Islands of Dread, an employer gains insight into the character of his colleagues. "He can see his employees, how they may behave in real life," Wimberley said. "Across the desk, he may not see that—too many facades."

The group has broken for lunch, but I'm anxious to see the high-elements, and so Daring Dave gives me the guided tour. At first glance, this part of the course appears as a jangled assortment of beams, poles, cables and ladders. The operative word here is, "high." I get a very bad feeling when Dave starts pointing 30 feet up in the air at two cables, one above the other, strung between what appears to be two telephone poles.

"And then you'll cross there."

"Um... I'm a little confused," I said. "You cross *where*?"

"Right across *there*," he said, pointing. "Well, you'll be able to tell better once you're up there."

"Oh, sure," I said with as much zest as I could muster. "You bet."

Back at camp, the scouts are finishing lunch. The boys are blissfully uninformed about the high-elements they will soon face.

Their meal finished, the scouts and their dads saunter toward the high-elements, which are partially concealed behind tall trees. Their pace slows, however, when confronted by the lofty maze of cables and poles skirting the treetops. Outwardly, they react, as I did, with plenty of bravado. Cries of "awesome" and "this is going to be great" echo through the woods. But as they draw closer a perceptible trepidation manifests itself in their facial expressions and voices. Some mutter quietly between themselves.

"What do you think?" one asked.

"Are you going to do it?" another inquired.

The fear we experience is painfully real, but in actuality, there is no risk. Approximately 30,000 people have gone through the course with nothing remotely close to a serious injury. "But logic doesn't overcome fear," Wimberley observed. "It's perceived to be risky."

Which is fine, because without fear, we'd have no challenge to surmount. The instructor, Jim Shields, gives us a crash course in the mountaineering equipment to be used followed by another assurance that we'll be attached to a safety-line at all times.

With that, we begin.

Up the low incline, then across the catwalk toward the rope ladder which stretches up to the cables. So far so good. But now, I must face the cables which have loomed large in my mind for the past half-hour. They're called the Heebie-Jeebies for the reaction they trigger in people and for the truly terrifying manner in which they wobble as one tries to inch across them. Taking a deep breath, I step on the lower cable, grip the upper cable firmly and slowly begin to move across. Immediately, the cable bucks wildly, and I'm thrown backward. Thrusting myself forward, as Jim advised, quickly increases the tension in the cable. The wobble lessens.

But I'm a nervous wreck.

From the ground, my minor crisis must look silly, but from my standpoint



In this exercise, the leader guides a blindfolded group around obstacles like barrels and tree branches. The line trusts the leader and shares information (or doesn't and falls apart).

the wind is howling in my ears, the blood is roaring in my skull, and the grim reaper is standing with his scythe down below, waving at me with a bony hand. The cables are still quivering enough to unnerve me, and I try to ask the instructor waiting for me at the Crow's Nest on the other side if these evil wires are supposed to wobble so much, but I've stopped breathing.

"Is it...is it..." I stammered.

The instructor looked at me quizzically.

"Is it s-supposed to w-w-wobble this m-much?" I finally managed.

"Yes," Jim replied casually.

A few more tense moments and I step to the safety of the Crow's Nest. From this height, the lake sparkles in the sunlight just beyond the trees. The Zip Line, a trapeze designed to slide along yet another cable that stretches for about 100 yards between two poles, awaits. For good measure, I tug on my carabiner (a rock climber's tool that encircles my slender rope like a chubby bracelet on a skinny wrist), clutch the bar of the trapeze and leap off the platform. Hurtling down the cable past the trees above a dry creek bed is an exhilarating experience. Some fear the Zip Line, but for me it was justified

reward after the nightmare experience on the Heebie-Jeebies.

Feeling invigorated, I release my safety line and prepare for the final challenge: The Pamper Pole. This pole, which again resembles a stripped telephone pole, soars 35 feet into the air and stands aloof from the rest of the course. Whether by accident or by design, it wobbles and sways wickedly as you ascend. At the top, a platform not much wider than a pair of shoes rests. The idea of this element is to leap off the platform and grab a trapeze that hangs from cables about seven feet away. You're safely connected to a belay at all times.

By this time, I'm eyeing the pole rather mournfully from the ground.

"Are you going to try it, Steve?" several of the boys inquired, their faces beaming and expectant, their eyes swiveling between me and the pole.

There's a long pause.

"Yeah, I guess so," I groaned.

On goes a crash helmet and a second safety harness. After hooking onto the safety line, I climb the pole, gripping each tiny, makeshift rung like a vise. The moment of truth with this exercise is climbing onto the platform as the pole writhes beneath you. Finally, I'm

on top, and I slowly straighten my knees. My eyes are on the trapeze, but it seems to be moving out of reach. The group shouts encouragement from far below.

"Go for height!"

"Focus on the trapeze!"

"Don't look down!"

"Hurry up!"

I balk several times. Then, I silently count to three and leap into the air. For a split-second, time is suspended, and I don't see or hear anything. Suddenly, the cold, steel bar of the trapeze is in my hands, and cheers erupt from the crowd.

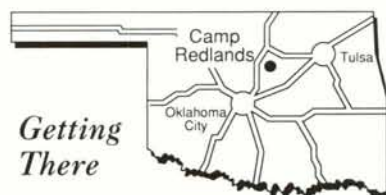
Daring Dave lowers me to terra firma, and with trembling hands, I pass on the safety rope to one of the dads, who gazes at me sadly from beneath his bright yellow crash helmet. Apparently, his son, after watching me, wanted to know when his dad was going to conquer the fearsome pole.

"Thanks a lot," he said morosely.

I give him a can-do smile.

Incidentally, the boys caught Mr. Harper without a hitch. ☐

Stephen Berg is a Stillwater writer. Gary Lawson is chief photographer for the Stillwater NewsPress.



The OSU Outdoor Adventure Ropes Course is held at Camp Redlands in the northwest tip of Payne County. When you make reservations, you'll get detailed directions.

Groups should make reservations at least two months in advance, particularly for weekend courses in the spring and fall.

Cost for the program is \$50 per instructor and \$5 per participant. One instructor and one volunteer (to help the instructor) are needed for every 6-10 participants. For a brochure, write Outdoor Adventure, 126 Colvin Center, OSU, Stillwater 74078 or call (405) 744-7315.

Porter And Stratford

A Peach of a Rivalry

By Barbara Palmer

Stratford?" asks Harriet McCollough, president of the Porter Chamber of Commerce and, by rights, a Porter peach loyalist. "Where's that? Never heard of it."

"Porter?" inquire Stratford residents. "Isn't that where Stratford peaches once won first prize at the peach festival?"

In Oklahoma, trying to determine the location of the Peach Capital can be as sticky a proposition as biting into a just-picked Red Skin. Two towns, Porter, in Wagoner County, and Stratford, in Garvin County, lay claim to the title. Two Peach Queens reign in the state, two panels of judges weigh the merits of bushels of prized peaches and two peach festivals dedicate themselves to reveling in the summer peach harvest.

According to Ann Fischer of the Blackledge-Fischer Orchard near Porter, that's one too many peach capitals. "There is no rivalry," says Ann. "We ARE the peach capital."

"WE are the certified peach capital of Oklahoma," insists Mary Wood, president of the Stratford Chamber of Commerce. "We were certified by the Oklahoma Department of, oh, of something."

If you take one view, then Porter is indeed the peach capital of Oklahoma by virtue of a proclamation presented by then Gov. George Nigh in 1983. If you take another view and judge Oklahoma's peach capital as a place where the most peaches are grown, then Stratford has a pretty good shot at the title.

You could, of course, take the peach lover's view. Two peach capitals are surely better than one.



Bushels of Porter's prized peaches are auctioned off at each Peach Festival and the proceeds go to charity. One memorable year a bushel of Blackledge-Fischer peaches brought in \$3,000.

In Oklahoma, the peach season is blissfully long, beginning as early as the first of June and lasting sometimes into October. (The Blackledge Late was developed by Ernest Fischer's grandfather precisely for its late blooming qualities; the Candor Cling is among the earliest of peaches.)

The peak of the season is late June to early August. In Stratford, the peach festival traditionally falls on the third weekend in July. This year, the Porter festival will also take place on July 21.

"Good grief," says Harriet McCollough, with exaggerated innocence. "How did we manage that?"

Judging from the line-up at the Stratford fest, Porter could expect the town

to compete for the title of peach capital. Stratford likes contests. There will be more at the peach festival than you can shake a stick at: ugly dog, best dressed dog, best decorated turtle, rolling pin throwing, best parade float and liar's contests. A rodeo is also held in conjunction with the festival and the Peach Queen and Peach Princess are crowned on Saturday night. Free peach ice cream is served in the afternoon to all comers.

In Porter, there will be a parade and a dance and arts and crafts booths along Main Street. Porter holds frog jumping and pet contests and serves peaches with cake. In both towns, though, the main event at the festival is a peach

contest and an auction of the year's prize peaches.

Last year, reports Ann Fischer, her husband and her father spent most of two days hand-picking the twelve-and-one-half bushels they entered for judging. Or more accurately, hand-picking the trees from which the twelve-and-a-half bushels of peaches would be plucked. The actual peaches weren't picked until the last possible minute before the contest. Each peach is then scrutinized, held up against a standard of absolute peach perfection.

"Uniformity is important," says Fischer. "They should all be about the same size." Color is important, too, and complicated. For some varieties of peaches, the ideal peach is yellow with a red blush. In others the ideal is red with a yellow blush.

The ideal peach, some would say, is one baked in a cobbler.

Porter resident Hazel Lang has been making cobbler since she was 14 years old and has an understandable bias towards Porter peaches. Hazel's won the trophy for the best peach cobbler at the Porter festival four times. She doesn't speak directly to Stratford and Porter's rivalry, but makes clear it's serious business, like the making of peach cobbler.

Lately, she's stopped entering the cobbler contest and has broken her long-standing rule against giving her winning recipe out.

The egg in the filling is different from most recipes, says Hazel, but it's not the secret ingredient. The real secret of the recipe is using tree-ripened peaches. "Best way is to go to the orchard and pick the ripest peach from the tree. Don't let them get ripe off the tree."

As cobbler champ, her method was to pick the peaches the evening before the festival and make the cobbler the next morning. "That way it's still warm for the judging."

Pauline Johnson, from Stratford, advises cooks not to plan ahead. "When you want a cobbler, then go get the peaches." They should be plucked

Hazel Lang's Porter Peach Cobbler

Filling 1 1/2 quarts sliced peaches 2 teaspoons fruit protector 1 teaspoon cinnamon 2 tablespoons butter or margarine 1 cup sugar 1 tablespoon cornstarch 1/4 teaspoon salt 1 egg, beaten	Crust 2 cups flour 2/3 cup shortening 1 teaspoon salt 5 tablespoons water For top: 1 egg, beaten 1 tablespoon milk
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Select tree-ripened peaches. Peel and slice. Do not cook.

Make crust. Roll. Use half the crust as a liner in bottom of a 9x9-inch baking dish. Spoon in filling and cover with remaining dough. Brush top with beaten egg and milk.

Bake in a 400 degree oven for 15 minutes. Reduce temperature to 350 degrees and continue baking 30 minutes until well browned.



Pauline Johnson's Stratford Peach Cobbler

Crust 1 cup flour 1/2 teaspoon salt 1/2 cup shortening 1/3 cup ice water	Filling - Peaches - Sugar - Cornstarch - Cinnamon, optional
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Sift together dry ingredients and cut in shortening. Add water until it makes a nice pie dough. Line a square baking dish with pastry and add peaches to fill. Sprinkle with enough sugar to sweeten and add cornstarch. (If you like the taste of cinnamon, add it now. Pauline doesn't.) Add a top crust and slash vents, or make a crisscross top. Bake it in a medium oven until it's brown. Eat the first piece of cobbler with ice cream. Eat leftovers plain.

from the tree practically while the oven is warming up.

Pauline is nonplussed when asked for her cobbler recipe. It's been years since she's measured any ingredients, she says. She doesn't use an oven timer, either. "I can't tell you how long to bake cobbler. I just cook it 'til it gets nice and brown."

Though Pauline's method allows for self-expression, learning the technique requires patience. "When I first started making it, it was so watery my dad said he had to chase it down. And it was tough." ☐

Barbara Palmer is assistant editor of Oklahoma Today.



Both the Porter and the Stratford peach festivals are scheduled this year for July 21. For information in Porter, call (918) 483-4301, and in Stratford, call (405) 759-2201.

Orchard owners in both Stratford and Porter allow customers to pick their own peaches. Since the height of peach harvest is during the hotter part of the year, Ann Fischer recommends trying to make it to the orchard before midday.

American Indian Exposition

To the beat of the drum

By Jeanne M. Devlin

Out of the 59 years that the American Indian Exposition has been held in Anadarko, Rubie Williams of Ft. Cobb can remember missing five. And in those years, though living in Kansas at the time, Rubie Williams made certain she caught the opening day parade on her radio.

"I can remember ironing a big bushel basket of ironing and listening to the entire parade," says Mrs. Williams. "They'd announce what families were there and who was coming by the grandstand and just like it was in my mind's eye I could almost visualize what was going on."

The American Indian Exposition, one of the first Indian-owned and -operated fairs in the United States, was that much a part of the fiber of her being.

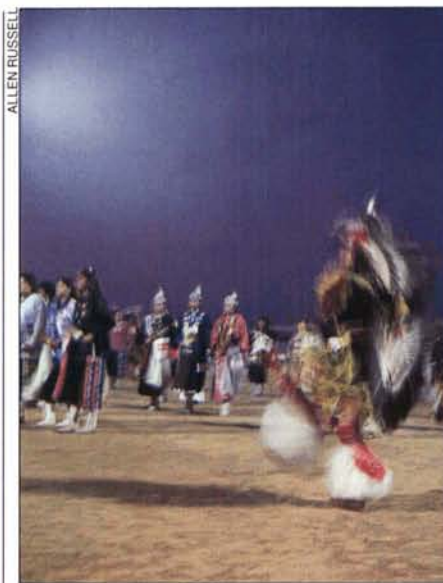
And, that unforgettable.

"Any time you see 500 to 400 Indians in costume and dancing that's pretty big, even for me," says Mrs. Williams, who herself is a full-blood Kiowa. "It's beautiful and like nothing you see on television. When you go to the fair, you're seeing the best dancers."

"The best."

It is said that the American Indian Exposition began with a handful of Indian trinkets in a small booth in the women's exhibition hall of the Caddo County Free Fair in the late 1920s.

"At the time," says Parker McKenzie, one of the subsequent founders of the exposition, "non-Indians of the area, except pawnbrokers, had no care



When a Kiowa is born in the winter, he is considered to be one winter old. This year, the American Indian Exposition is 59 winters.

of things Indian, even from a commercial standpoint.

"Some," adds the 92-year-old Kiowa, "even regarded Indians as commercial drawbacks and put out signs, reading 'No Indians allowed.'"

The booth at that first county fair was the idea of the late Susie C. Peters, the so-called "field matron" for the then Kiowa Agency, a local office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs that served the seven tribes of the Anadarko area. McKenzie remembers Peters as being "the lone advocate of Indian art," a woman who used her own money to support Indian artists, such as the now famous Kiowa artists known as the Kiowa Five.

That first year, Susie Peters won fair officials in Anadarko over to her idea,

McKenzie says, by telling the men that an Indian booth would be an attraction unique to the county fair.

Fair officials weren't convinced. But she did have a point. County fairs were always trying to outdo each other, and, so, they acquiesced.

Time proved Susie Peters right.

With each subsequent fair, says McKenzie, the booth drew more crafts from more Indians and more visitors. Indian participation in the county fair also spawned an unexpected side benefit: an annual Indian encampment, created by Indians bringing their teepees and their families and camping for the week at the fairgrounds.

Soon talk among Indian leaders of Caddo County turned to starting their own fair, an Indian-managed fair. McKenzie says the ultimate catalyst for what would become the American Indian Exposition was when the Caddo County fair board commenced to slashing budgets during the Depression. "Naturally," he says, "the first whack fell on exhibits of Indian arts and crafts."

When the fair board told Susie Peters it could no longer pay for premiums on Indian exhibits or for personnel expenses, Peters made a beeline to John A. Buntin, superintendent of the Kiowa Agency. Her objective: To request that Buntin get the money to continue the booth from the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C.

Buntin, McKenzie says, realized many of his Indian charges were building a life by farming, raising livestock and carrying on their traditional crafts and so he saw merit in Peters' plea. "He prevailed on the central office in Wash-

ington to allocate a small sum for the purpose," McKenzie adds, "and it came through with the tremendous sum of \$75, which then was 'heap big' money."

Then Buntin did something unexpected. He suggested to Jasper Saunkeah, then a local district game ranger, that perhaps the money could seed the Indian-run fair so many Anadarko Indians had powwowed so long about. "Saunkeah came immediately to my desk at the BIA office where I then was employed," McKenzie recalls. "We at once decided, 'why not?'"

The American Indian Exposition of Anadarko was born. The year was 1932.

"Money was scarce in the so-called Great Depression," McKenzie recalls. "We Indians were bold—maybe foolish—to start an enterprise at the time."

Not so foolish.

Since 1932, the exposition has been held every year in Anadarko.

Rubie Williams grew up 46 miles southwest of the town of Anadarko on a farm that produced wheat and oats and big potatoes and some of the sweetest corn in the county.

Every August, without fail, her family of 11 loaded up the best of that bounty, along with mattresses for each family member and most of her mother's household possessions, in a sturdy wagon behind a good horse and relocated it to the Anadarko fairgrounds in time to get a choice campsite for the annual American Indian Exposition. "It was our annual family vacation," Mrs. Williams says. "We'd pitch camp at the fairgrounds and stay the entire week."

It was a ritual repeated each August by Indian families throughout the county, and beyond. Mrs. Williams' husband, Johnny, who is president of this year's exposition, recalls he heard so much about the exposition as a young man living in Ponca City that one year he hopped on a bus to come see it for himself. Sixty years later, he still believes, "This American Indian Exposition is something really to be proud of."

In the old days, the arrival of fair

season was signaled not so much by the calendar as by the sight of Indian mothers canning beets and pickles and making vast quantities of jams and jellies. "My mother would have one whole day when she did nothing but bread baking," recalls Mrs. Williams.

Once at the exposition, she adds, the mothers stayed at the camp, tending to the open fire, whisking children and spouses into tribal finery and off to the many pageants and dance contests and seeing to it that no one within the sound of their voices went hungry. "It was nothing for my mother to holler at someone two or three camps over, and say to them, 'Let those folks eat and you come eat with us.'"

"Those things went on and around," Mrs. Williams adds, proudly.

"Our people were close."

The memory of how it was at the exposition makes Rubie Williams wince at the way it is now. "Maybe we've learned too many white man ways," she observes, matter-of-factly. Today, Rubie finds the exposition, "fairly the same, but everything has changed."

To her, that's not a contradiction.

Indians of many tribes still reunite for a week or two every August at the fairgrounds for the annual exposition, but they come now pulling fancy trailers outfitted with lights and air-conditioning. "The women cook inside the trailer," Mrs. Williams says, with a disapproving tsk, tsk.

Instead of brush arbors, wealthy Indians in the '90s stake tent arbors, which Mrs. Williams likens to miniature circus tents. Children can still ride the merry-go-round, but it no longer costs 5 cents. The permanent teepee that once housed exhibits has been replaced with the more conventional Baldwin Building. And crafts displays have usurped much of the space that once went to prize tomatoes and pears.

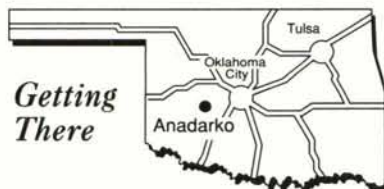
Still, at 71 years of age, Mrs. Williams says the essence of the American Indian Exposition remains. "It has always been a homecoming," she says.

And it remains a way for the Indian to

put across his culture in a way that the white man can grasp. "If the American Indian can have a clean, decent show for the good white man and woman to come and see what we do," says Mrs. Williams, "maybe they can have a change of mind and have better attitudes and thoughts toward the Indian."

"I'm awed to see some of our young men come out in their costumes. Some of these dancers are doctors, lawyers and principals," Mrs. Williams says, "and to see them don Indian clothes and dance to their own music, well, that's something." 

Jeanne M. Devlin is managing editor of Oklahoma Today.



During exposition week, Anadarko is so ablaze with color that it can sometimes seem as if the heat of an Oklahoma August has materialized into human form.

This year's exposition runs August 20-25 at the Caddo County Fairgrounds in Anadarko, 18 miles west of Interstate 44 on S.H. 9.

If you can make only one day of the exposition, Rubie Williams says make it Monday and make it in time for the parade at 10 a.m., when the floats, horseback riders, Indian princesses and Indian participants (all in full regalia) parade through town. "That's something to see," she promises.

Monday and Wednesday evenings at 8, local Plains Indians stage a historical pageant (another must-see). Tuesday through Friday, the doors open with greyhound and horse racing at 2 p.m. Nights without pageants are turned over at 8 to dancing.

The exposition closes Saturday with the World Championship War Dancing at 8 p.m. For more information, call the Anadarko Chamber of Commerce at (405) 247-6651.

Barnyard Art

A Sculptor Retools

By Patrick Breslin

Every other Saturday, a corner of the flea market at the Tulsa Fairgrounds turns into a brightly-colored, clanking menagerie.

Roosters, ducks, elephants, turtles, giraffes and grasshoppers vie for space on a crowded table—all of them welded from pieces of farm implements, bicycle parts and old tools. A small pipe wrench and a fanned-out vegetable strainer

are the essential parts of a turkey. The base for a lawn sprinkler forms a barrel-chested elephant's head and ears. A crane stands tall on legs fashioned from a bicycle fork. Two dangling red shoe-horns become a rooster's wattles and a rock plow its arched tail feathers.

Browsing shoppers get a silly smile on their face when they recognize a commonplace tool transformed into the graceful lines of bird or beast. The man who first sees the unexpected in scraps of iron lives with his wife on a 20-acre hay farm near Glencoe about 40 miles west of Tulsa.

Ron Curtis is a 52-year-old farmer and electrician who retired from both callings with a bad back three years ago. About that time, a man he knew offered to buy all the shovel blades Curtis could round up. The man told Cur-

tis he intended to make birds from the blades; he figured by welding legs, neck and a beak to the spoon of metal he could produce a reasonable approximation of a crow. "I accumulated a bunch of them and he went off on vacation," recalled Curtis. "When he came back, why he was tapped out. I kept trying to sell those shovel heads to him for a couple of months. And then I said, 'Well, if I can't sell them, I'll just make something out of them.'"

All Curtis knew about welding was that his father had done it. But he got the equipment and commenced to making his own shovel birds. Then he branched out. "I started developing new things, as the spirit hit me," he said. "Aside from the bird made out of a shovel, everything else I dreamed up."



Ron Curtis devotes hours to his "found art" creations, but leaves the selling to wife Eula Mae. "I don't have the patience for it," he says. "I can't sit still."

Curtis figures he's made about 100 different figures at this point. He's covered most of the animal kingdom and a good deal of human nature as well.

His is definitely an art not a science. There are sculptures, like a motorcycle comprised of 100-year-old pulleys, he hasn't been able to repeat because he's been unable to find the same metal parts. And he still can't predict when a design will or won't work.

"I've got my failures sitting on the fenceposts around here," Curtis said. "They keep me humble."

One idea that did jell is the rooster. Its legs are spindly and you could sever your knee on its sharp beak, but it captures the barnyard bird's strutting pride and brilliant colors.

Curtis works on his barnyard art by his barn, which sits right next to the chicken coop. It's a handy arrangement Curtis says when he needs to check a point of anatomy, though he's got roosters down pretty good now.

And that's created a new problem: Producing on demand. Curtis isn't thrilled with mass-producing his roosters—makes him feel like an assembly line, not the artist he is—but the truth is people buy them. "If I had my choice, I'd make only one of a kind of

anything," Curtis said. "But, the wife likes some spending money, so I try to give her what sells."

Eula Mae Curtis is married to Curtis, but she's also the closest thing the rural artist has to a manager. Eula Mae handles all the sales on weekends. She's the one who urges her recalcitrant sculptor to sculpt with the public in mind, even when it seems a bit mundane. Eula Mae also works during the week cleaning houses. The added income from the sculptures is welcome. "The way the countryside is now," Curtis observed, "about two-thirds of the people that live in it have to go to town to work. The birds and animals supplement what Eula Mae brings in. Between the two of us, why we're going to get up close to the poverty line one of these days."

Hard times in the countryside, ironically, also give Curtis much of his raw material. The best place to find metal parts, he says, is an old farmer who's farmed all his life who decides to quit and sell all his equipment so he can move to town. Knowing this, he seldom has to travel more than 30 miles for parts, and his barn has become a neat warehouse for tools, pulley hooks, bicycle forks and boxes of ball bearings.

Despite this order and his proficiency, it can take Curtis four hours to turn out one rooster. Yet his pieces sell for \$30 to \$40. "If I just thought about the profit that was in it I would have quit yesterday," he said.

What keeps him going is the novelty of it all, the way his mind's eye can see the lines of a new creature, even in the most unlikely of materials. "I might look at two pieces of metal and not have any idea what I'm going to turn out with. I hold them this way and that way, and I throw them back on the pile and forget about them. But then when I get ready to build something, why that thing I was looking at a while back, I go pick it up.

"Like the little elephant," he explained. "I don't know I was even thinking about making an elephant. I came across the cast iron sprinkler, and

I picked it up. Those look like ears, like elephant ears. And it was pretty easy to put a trunk on it. I didn't start out to make an elephant. I just ran across the part that would make an elephant. It

"Some things lend themselves, without too much bending, into something, and other things you have to stretch a little bit."

—Ron Curtis

happens all ways."

Sometimes, planning jogs his muse. "I've got a little blackboard down at the barn there," Curtis said, pointing. "I scratch out the idea on it. It may sit there for six months. Then, one day, I'll come across the right piece of material and I put it together. I've got ideas for a rabbit in mind right now. I've got the ears figured out. Soon as I find the right body, I'll make a rabbit."

In his sitting room, the curved head of a pick rests upside down on a sheet of newspaper. In the slot where the handle would go sits a round figure made of different sized ball bearings, looking for all the world like a bundled-up Eskimo; it didn't take much of a jump to see the pick as something akin to a kayak. "I just put that together last week," Curtis said. "That's just a thinking stage there. I wanted to know if it was going to look like what I thought it ought to look like. I'll probably grind it down and paint it up. I think it'll make a passable piece."

It is his knowledge of tools, and his appreciation of them, that guides Curtis' work. "The first time I looked at a bicycle fork I thought, why those things are beautiful," Curtis said. "What gets me is so many tools that we use, the shapes and form are human, or like living things. The bicycle fork is shaped like a leg.

"Some things lend themselves, with-

out too much bending them out of shape, into something, and other things you have to stretch a little bit. I like to leave most of my pieces natural if they fit in at all to what I'm making, instead of just taking a square piece of metal and grinding it down into a shape.

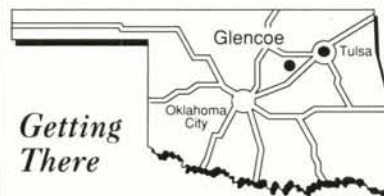
"Find the shape in it," he suggested. "You destroy the uniqueness of the tool if you change the shape too much."

Until recently, Curtis only signed the pieces he liked best. But now he signs everything he sells. As in most of the commercial aspects of his calling, it wasn't his idea. The public has Eula Mae to thank. Eula Mae says she cajoled her husband into doing it after people began asking her why Curtis rarely put his name on his work.

Curtis was leery about changing his way at first, but he's since come around to the idea.

"I figured out that when it was all sold—everything I've made—it's gone. I'll never see it anymore. So the only thing I'll have is the satisfaction of knowing when I'm dead and gone it's going to be sitting in somebody's yard or up on somebody's shelf and they'll be saying 'Who the heck was Ron Curtis?'"

Patrick Breslin, who lives in Washington, D.C., but frequents Oklahoma, has written for Smithsonian magazine.



Eula Mae Curtis sells her husband's tool sculptures every other Saturday at the Tulsa Flea Market, in the middle of the Tulsa Fairgrounds, at S. 19th and New Haven. The Curtis booth is in the southeast corner of the room farthest to the north. You can check to see if Eula Mae will be there on a given Saturday by calling the Tulsa Flea Market, (918) 744-1386.

ENTERTAINMENT CALENDAR

J U L Y ♦ A U G U S T '9 0

♦ P R I M E T I M E S ♦

♦ **July 13-15** Tonkawa means "they all stay together," and the Tonkawa Tribal Powwow remains true to its name. For three days each summer, singers and dancers perform traditional dances, sleep under brush arbors and cook over campfires. ♦ ***July 14-15** Cannons boom and dust flies as regiments of Civil War reenactors recreate the historic Battle of Honey Springs north of Checotah. (As a counterpoint to all the fighting, ladies in hoop skirts serve high tea in a tent.) ♦ ***July 28** A pancake breakfast starts off a big day of eating during Whole Hawg Day in Eufaula. Residents compete to cook the best smoked pork; after the judging, cooks pass out free sandwiches. Plus: a hog-calling contest, a parade and a street dance. ♦ ***August 22** The Old Settlers' Reunion in South Park in Vinita began 55 years ago as a reunion of former students of the Willie Halsell College, Will Rogers' alma mater. Since then, a fiddler's contest and a rodeo have been added to the wingding.



MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

JULY

- 1-31 Steven Deo Exhibit, Plains Indians and Pioneers Museum, Woodward, (405) 256-6131
- 1-Aug. 5 "R.E. Gillet: March of the Forgotten," OU Museum of Art, Norman, (405) 325-3272
- 1-Aug. 26 "Earth, Sea and Sky: The Art of Charles H. Woodbury," Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, (918) 582-3122
- 1-Aug. 30 "The Bill Lucas Collection," Int'l Photo Hall of Fame, Kirkpatrick Center, OKC, (405) 424-4055
- 1-Aug. 31 "It's in the Bag," Center of the American Indian, Kirkpatrick Center, OKC, (405) 427-5228
- 1-Sept. 1 "Search for the Purebloods," Portraits by Charles Banks Wilson, OK Museum of Natural History, Norman, (405) 325-4711
- 6-Aug. 12 "Province Town and the Art of Printmaking," West

- 6-Aug. 19 Gallery, Kirkpatrick Center, OKC, (405) 427-5461
- "Annell Livingston Watercolors," Kirkpatrick Center, Oklahoma Room, OKC, (405) 427-5461
- 7-Aug. 25 "Linda Brown: Paintings," Firehouse Art Center, Norman, (405) 329-4523
- 21-22, Aug. 11-12 Kirkpatrick Crafts, African Gallery, OKC, (405) 427-5461

AUGUST

- 1-31 "Molas: Needle Art of Cuna Indian Women," Central Library, Tulsa, (918) 596-7977
- 1-31 Creative Craft Contest, Plains Indians and Pioneers Museum, Woodward, (405) 256-6136
- 1-31 Aerospace America Photo Contest, Int'l Photo Hall of Fame, OKC, (405) 424-4055
- 13-17 "Aviation and Rocketry," Air Space Museum, OKC, (405) 427-5461
- 16-Oct. 2 "Letters/Lines/Images: Currents in Int'l Calligraphy," Kirkpatrick Gallery, OKC, (405) 427-5461
- 20-Sept. 12 "Joy Flynn Knutson: Watercolor," Gardiner Art Gallery, Stillwater, (405) 744-6016

* Denotes a Homecoming '90 event.



DRAMA

JULY

- 1-7 "The Lion in Winter," The Pollard Theatre, Guthrie, (405) 282-2800
- 1-14 "Treasure Island," John Williams Theatre, Tulsa, (918) 747-9494
- 1-21 Center Stage Summer Theater, Community Center, Bartlesville, (918) 336-2787
- 1-Aug. 11 "Expiring Minds Want to Know or Six Women With Brain Death," Carpenter Square Theatre, OKC, (405) 232-6500
- 1-Aug. 25 "Eddie and the Ecclectics," The Brady Theater, Tulsa, (918) 747-9494
- 3-14 "Promises, Promises," Lyric Theater, OKC, (405) 5234-7111
- 6-8 "The Wizard of Oz," OK Children's Theatre, OKC (405) 948-6408
- *6-22 OK Shakespearean Festival, Durant, (405) 924-0121
- 10-15, 17-22 "The Music Man," Town and Gown Theatre, Stillwater, (405) 372-9122
- 11-13, 18-20 "Sugar," Edmond Community Theatre, Edmond, (405) 478-4452
- *13-22 "The House at Pooh Corner," Theatre Tulsa, Tulsa, (918) 596-7111
- 17-28 "Mame," Lyric Theatre, OKC, (405) 524-7111
- 19-21, 24-28 "Paint Your Wagon," Shawnee Little Theatre, Shawnee, (405) 275-2805
- *20-Aug. 12 "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," Theatre Tulsa, Tulsa, (918) 596-7111
- 20-Aug. 18 "Not Now Darling," The Pollard Theatre, Guthrie, (405) 282-2800
- 24-Aug. 5 "Aesop's Fables," OK Children's Theatre, OKC, (405) 948-6408
- *26-28 "Broadway Spectacular '90!," Ada Community Theatre, Ada, (405) 436-3226
- 27-Aug. 5 "Cabaret," Performing Arts Center, Tulsa, (918) 596-7111
- 31-Aug. 11 "Big River," Lyric Theatre, OKC, (405) 524-7111

AUGUST

- *4-6, 10-11 "Oklahoma!" McLain Rogers Park Amphitheater, Clinton, (800)-759-1397



FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

JULY

- 4 9th Annual Family Fun Festival, Eldon Lyon Park, Bethany, (405) 789-1256
- *9-15 Heritage Days, El Reno, (405) 262-1188
- *12-14 Cookson Jubilee, Cookson, (918) 457-5476
- 13-15 Mid-America Summerfest '90, OK Woodring Airport, Enid, (405) 233-1326
- *19-22 Striper Festival, Kingston, (405) 564-2623
- 21 Peach Festival, Porter, (918) 483-4301
- 21 Peach Festival, Stratford, (405) 759-2201

- 30-Aug. 4 Ada Western Heritage Week, Downtown, Ada, (405) 436-6300

AUGUST

- 9-11 Bluegrass Festival, Powderhorn Park, Langley, (918) 425-5887
- 11 Langley Day Festival, Langley, (918) 782-3066



INDIAN EVENTS

JULY

- 2-4 Quapaw Powwow, Quapaw, (918) 542-1853
- 6-7 NW OK Indian Powwow, Woodward, (405) 256-7411
- *13-15 Sac and Fox Powwow, Stroud, (918) 968-3526
- 13-15 Tonkawa Tribal Powwow, Tonkawa, (405) 628-2543
- 19-22 Otoe-Missouria Annual Encampment, Red Rock, (405) 723-4506
- *20-22 Comanche Homecoming, Sultan Park, Walters, (405) 353-0350
- 27-29 Indian Hills Powwow, OKC, (405) 391-9580

AUGUST

- 3-5 Kaw Powwow, Washunga Bay, Kaw City, (405) 362-3552
- *4 "A Salute to the Sac and Fox Nation," Stroud, (918) 968-3526
- 9-12 Tulsa Powwow, Mohawk Park, (918) 596-7877
- 20-25 American Indian Exposition, Anadarko, (405) 247-6651
- 24-26 Indian Powwow of Champions, Expo Square, Tulsa, (918) 744-1113
- 31-Sept. 2 Ponca City Int'l Powwow, (405) 762-6770

RODEO AND HORSE EVENTS

JULY

- *4 Fourth of July Rodeo, Rodeo Grounds, Cache, (405) 355-5763
- 8-9 Nat'l Palomino Youth Congress, Expo Square, Tulsa, (918) 744-1113
- *9-16 Heritage Days Rodeo, El Reno, (405) 262-1188
- 11-14 Palomino World Show, Expo Square, Tulsa, (918) 744-1113
- 16-21 Nat'l Pinto Show, Expo Square, Tulsa, (918) 744-1113
- 18-21 Int'l Cavalcade, Osage County Fairgrounds, Pawhuska, (918) 287-1208
- 18-21 Elks Rodeo, Woodward, (405) 256-7411
- 23-29 Nat'l High School Finals Rodeo, Shawnee, (405) 275-7020
- *26-28 Wrangler Rodeo Days, Fairview, (405) 227-4511
- 27-29 Ketchum Rodeo, Ketchum, (918) 782-2610
- 27-29 State 4-H Horse Show, Expo Square, Tulsa, (918) 744-1113
- 28 Green Country Rodeo, Fairgrounds, Miami, (918) 786-4272

AUGUST

- *3-4 Clinton Rodeo, Clinton, (405) 323-2222
- *9-11 Lions IPRA Championship Rodeo, Sallisaw, (918) 775-2558
- *9-11 IPRA Annual Rodeo, Heavener, (918) 653-4303
- *9-11 Lawton Rangers Rodeo, LO Ranch, Lawton, (405) 355-3541
- 16-18 101 Ranch Rodeo, Rodeo Arena, Ponca City, (405) 762-3481
- 17-18 Bixby Ranch Days Rodeo, Allen Ranch, Bixby, (918) 366-3010
- 18-19 OK Paint Horse Club, Purcell, (405) 478-1599
- 23-25 Tumbleweed Fall Rodeo, Stillwater, (405) 377-0075
- 25-26 Charla Hartness Barrel Racing Futurity, Osage County Fairgrounds, Pawhuska, (918) 287-3164
- 31-Sept. 1 OK State Prison Rodeo, McAlester, (918) 426-1173



MUSIC AND DANCE

JULY

- 4 OK Sinfonia: American Salute, Boulder Park, Tulsa, (918) 596-7877
- 4-7 Bluegrass and Gospel Music Fest, Powderhorn Park, Langley, (918) 253-8471
- 5-8 Summerstage: "An Evening on Broadway," Performing Arts Center, Tulsa, (918) 596-7111
- 10, 17, 24 Starlight Concert, River West Festival Park, Tulsa, (918) 582-0051
- 12 Summer Twilight Concert, Chandler Park, Tulsa, (918) 583-0032
- 14 Chopin Piano Competition, CSU, Edmond, (405) 340-3500
- 17-22 "Les Miserables," Tulsa, (918) 596-7111
- 20, 24, 27-28 "Il Trovatore," Cameron University, Lawton, (405) 581-2440
- *24 Musical Jamboree, City Park, Cheyenne, (405) 497-2257

AUGUST

- *4 OK All-Night Singing, Veterans Memorial Park, Konawa, (405) 925-3434
- 9 Twilight Concert Series, Chandler Park, Tulsa, (918) 583-0032
- 12 KVOO Big Country Picnic, Expo Square, Tulsa, (918) 744-1113
- 15-18 Greenwood Jazz Festival, Tulsa, (918) 586-0708
- 18 Square Dance and Western Dance, Irving School Gym, Ada, (405) 332-7992
- 30-Sept. 2 World Series of Fiddling, Powderhorn Park, Langley, (405) 732-3964



SPECIAL EVENTS

JULY

- *1 Historic Homes Tour, Holdenville, (405) 379-6675
- *1-3 Chautauqua '90, Frederick, (405) 335-3287
- *2 Salute to Oklahomans, Mabec Center, Tulsa, (918) 456-5511
- *2-3 U.S. Marshall and Bill Tilghman Days, Chandler,

(405) 258-2217

- 4 Centennial 4th, El Reno, (405) 262-1188
- 4 Old Fashioned 4th of July Celebration, Clinton, (405) 323-2222
- *4 Parade of Celebration, Blackwell, (405) 363-4195
- 4 July 4th Festival, 12th Street Park, Moore, (405) 793-9145
- *4 Fourth of July Celebration Homecoming, River view Park, Miami, (918) 542-4481
- *4 Fireworks Show, Perry Floyd Lattimore Stadium, Sallisaw, (918) 775-2558
- 4 "Red, White and Blue Anything That Rolls" Parade, Downtown, Elk City, (405) 225-0207
- 4 River Parks 4th of July Celebration, Tulsa, (918) 582-0051
- 4-8 Quilt Show, Community Center, Grove, (918)-786-5167
- 4-8 SCCA Grand Prix Sports Car Races, Lake Ponca, Ponca City, (405) 765-4400
- *7 Jet-Nash Homecoming, Jet, (405) 865-4677
- *7 Alumni Reunion, Heavener, (918) 653-7222
- *13 Founder's Day, Pittsburg, (918) 432-5503
- *13-15 The Battle of Honey Springs, Checotah, (405) 521-2491
- 14 Flathead Catfish Noodling Contest, Langley, (918) 782-2227
- *14 Woody Guthrie Day, Okemah, (918) 623-0722
- *15 Old Settler's Reunion, Arnett, (405) 885-7666
- *15 Sands Oil Field Reunion, High School, Tonkawa, (405) 564-4192
- 21 Arkansas River Sandcastle Contest, 41st and Riverside, Tulsa, (918) 582-0051
- 21 State Championship Chili Cook-off, Nat'l Cowboy Hall of Fame, OKC, (405) 478-2250
- *27-28 Whole Hawg Day, Eufaula, (918) 689-2791
- *27-Aug. 10 Western Heritage Art Show, Ada, (405) 436-6600

AUGUST

- 3-5 Nat'l Junior Men's Water Polo, OKCCC, OKC, (405) 682-1611
- *4 Ada Day, Court House Lawn, Ada, (405) 332-2506
- 4 Woolaroc Family Day, Bartlesville, (918) 336-0307
- 11 Lake Tenkiller Lake Party, Cookson, (918) 457-4403
- *11 Harmon Co. Blackeyed Pea Festival, Hollis, (405) 688-9245
- 11 Lake Tenkiller Parade of Boats, Cookson, (918) 457-4403
- *11-19 Tackle Box Drop, Lake Texoma, Kingston, (405) 564-2334
- *15 Will Rogers Memorial Service, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, (918) 341-0719
- *17-18 Sapulpa Fest '90, Downtown, Sapulpa, (918) 224-2125
- *20 Homecoming '90 Summer Fest, The Thompson House, Tahlequah, (918) 456-9685
- 21 Eskimo Joe's Birthday, Elm Street, Stillwater, (405) 377-4232
- *22 Old Settler's Reunion and Fiddling Contest, South Park, Vinita, (918) 256-7133
- *31-Sept. 1 Terrapin Derby, McAlester, (918) 423-8759

Dates and details of entries in this calendar may change. We recommend calling before attending events.



*“While I know the standard
claim is that Yosemite and
the like afford the greatest
natural shows,
I am not sure but that the
Prairies and Plains
last longer, fill the aesthetic
sense fuller, precede
all the rest, and
make North America’s
characteristic landscape.”*

—Walt Whitman